

The Piano Teaching Legacy of Solomon Mikowsky

A Thesis by

Kookhee Hong

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“I would not enjoy teaching if I thought my work was reduced to showing students how to preserve museum pieces. Although I cannot stand carelessness with the score, I thrive on creativity and using the imagination.”

—Solomon Mikowsky (*Clavier*, September 2001)

PREFACE

After attending the Curtis Institute, I transferred to the Bachelor of Music degree program at Manhattan School of Music as a scholarship piano student of Solomon Mikowsky. Little did I know that I would remain his student through the Bachelors, Masters, Professional Studies and Doctor of Musical Arts degree programs. For eight years I have enjoyed the benefit of his talent, wisdom, experience, dedication, generosity and personal guidance. I am sure that every other pupil of his has had a like experience. His class of students has been as close to being a family as a group of competitive young professionals could possibly be.

Dr. Mikowsky is a master of his art and represents the continuation of a great pianistic and pedagogical tradition. He has been often honored through awards, articles, and the successes of his students. In selecting a topic for my doctoral dissertation, it seemed to me timely and relevant to record for posterity whatever he was willing to share with us about his life and teaching ideas.

We both agreed to cover the subject by way of informal dialogue. There was no attempt to superimpose any structure but the most general, allowing recollections to flow unimpeded and conclusions to come about naturally.

I appreciate the many hours that Dr. Mikowsky has spent with me in wide-ranging and probing discussion, as well as his friendly candor throughout all our meetings. It is my intent that future readers of these pages will come away with special insight into the labor of love that has been his life's calling.

Kookhee Hong
Los Angeles
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Part I

BIOGRAPHY

KH: When I originally discussed with you my intentions to dedicate my doctoral dissertation at Manhattan School of Music to your life and teaching legacy, your response was guarded as to sharing many aspects of your private life. You clearly let me know that the subject matter would be limited strictly to your pedagogical ideas. So, a bit surprised and pleasantly so, I now look forward to your sharing with the readers as much as possible about your life. As you have stated in the past, there is a close relationship between it and your career as a teacher.

We have to start somewhere, and my first question has to deal with something you never wanted to openly declare: your birth date! Are you now ready to tell us?

SM: I am very bad at remembering dates. Our readers will notice, I am sure, that all my life experiences will be fully described but seldom placed in a time frame. The date of my birth I actually do remember. You should know by now about my vanity and my hopes all along that my students would falsely believe that I am much younger than I actually am. But at this point in my life, I think it's best for everything to be in the open, as I am neither looking for a job, nor competing in a beauty contest.

I was born in Havana, Cuba on March 10, 1936. My official documents state that I was born the year before because of a mistake in the Cuban birth certificate used in order to become a United States citizen. I was not a typical Cuban raised in Cuba. I was born there, but my parents were Jews who had come to Cuba to escape from anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe.

KH: When your parents arrived in Cuba, were they already married?

SM: They had not yet met, and came separately and independently to Cuba. My father's name was Shimon Gadles (1903–1979) and he was born in a small town or *shtetl* called Grodno in what is now Belarus, near the border with Poland. At that time Belarus was part of Imperial Russia.

Because of prevailing anti-Semitism, Jews in Eastern Europe were segregated into thousands of *shtetls* that spread all over many countries for centuries. They spoke

Yiddish, an old dialect of German written with the Hebrew alphabet which was studied in the synagogue.

My father received almost no education and knew very little about the outside world beyond the confines of his *shtetl*. In Cuba he adopted the name of Israel as a result of switching his passport back home with his younger brother.

As a child, I also spoke Yiddish at home, which I studied at the *Centro Israelita* in Havana, the Jewish-Cuban elementary school I attended. My family and I also spoke Spanish, of course, which my parents had learned by the time I was born.

KH: How come your parents decided specifically to immigrate to Cuba?

SM: When my father was ordered to serve in the Russian Army cavalry in the late 1920s, he decided to emigrate, as anti-Semitism prevailed. The preferred country for immigration was the United States. However, because of labor unrest in the U.S. and other factors, Jews were not given immigration visas to the U.S. at that time.

KH: I am really surprised that this was the case. In the years I have lived in New York I have witnessed the very important role played by the Jewish community in all aspects of the city's life. I imagine this is also true throughout the United States, although possibly to a lesser extent.

SM: Don't be surprised! The President of the United States followed his political instincts. Granting visas to immigrants seeking work during the American Depression would have been a politically unwise move for re-election. Even the news coming from Europe about the extermination of the Jewish people by Hitler and the Nazis did not move the President at that time, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to take any action against Germany until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, in spite of the pleading of several close Jewish advisors, including Treasury Secretary Morgenthau, Supreme Court Justice Brandeis and future Justice Frankfurter. I learned this information from a lecture by Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel.

KH: Is that why your parents had to immigrate to Cuba?

SM: Yes. The island of Cuba, in the Caribbean and near the U.S. mainland, became one of the attractive places to consider for immigration as a stepping stone towards eventual immigration into the United States. However, upon finding out how wonderful life could be in Cuba, where the people did not harbor any hatred towards the non-Christian members of the community, as was the case in most European countries, my father and many other Jews decided to stay in Cuba and make their lives there. That was the case for up to 15,000 Jews who finally settled in Cuba. It was a sizable community.

KH: What about your mother?

SM: Her story is somewhat different. She was called Rochl in Yiddish and Raquel later on in Spanish, but her Cuban citizenship documents listed her as Maria Ruchla Mikowska (1904–1967). She was born in Warsaw as part of a family comprised of her parents and eight siblings. Her lifestyle was different from my father's. Jews in Warsaw were somewhat segregated but they still lived in the city and not in a small *shtetl*. Her parents were well-off enough before the First World War for her to be able to receive private instruction from a tutor at home. Although my mother was permitted later on to receive some formal education in the public school system, she confessed to me that, as a child, she was not allowed to sit at a desk like the other Polish children, but was forced to stand for hours during lectures.

After the War, they lost everything! Similar to my father, she and her family were subjected to the intense anti-Semitism prevalent in devout Catholic countries such as Poland. The economic situation of the family became desperate, having to live in one single room in a fourth-floor walk-up. At least one of her brothers became very ill with tuberculosis.

KH: I can see that there were more than enough reasons for your mother to want to emigrate from Poland.

SM: Although my mother was involved in an intense romance with a Jewish Zionist who eventually immigrated to Palestine in order to work on the creation of a permanent homeland for the Jewish people there, she decided to follow the invitation of her childhood friend, Ana Rubinstein, and also immigrate to Cuba. My mother's goal was to be able to work in Cuba and save money in order to return to Poland and bring her whole family to Havana with her. Soon thereafter, she arrived in Havana, the same year my father arrived. They met and were married a few months later.

KH: Being Korean I can relate to the loneliness that your parents must have felt, getting married in a distant land far away from their own families.

SM: My mother was aware that her parents back in Poland needed some kind of reassurance that she was marrying a nice and decent man. This was offered by way of a letter written by the head of the Jewish community in Havana at that time, Samuel Grinstein, who knew my father and wrote to my mother's family in Warsaw.

KH: So, how did they survive in such an unfamiliar environment without even speaking the language?

SM: My father and his fellow immigrants were good businessmen, but they had little education. They had not been permitted in Europe to study for or enter a profession, so all they could do was to buy and sell merchandise. Without a profession, my father survived early on by selling fancy-looking rings to prostitutes in the Havana bordellos. In spite of any opinion that I should exclude such information from my life story, I am

actually proud of my father's sense of survival and willingness to do whatever was needed to face those most difficult early years after immigration.

Eventually, he was able to rent a space and open a jewelry store on the famous Prado Boulevard, right across the street from the Havana Capitol. I was born in the building above the jewelry store. As his finances improved, my father was kind and open-minded enough to begin sending money to my mother's former boyfriend who was struggling in Palestine with a precarious financial situation at that time. Later on as a teenager, I helped my father during my summer vacations as he wished for me to join him and eventually take over his business as an adult.

KH: I know you have an older sister. What is your age difference?

SM: My older sister, Luisa, was born in 1928, about one year after my parents' marriage. I was born eight years later. In 1938, my mother decided it was time to bring her two children back to Warsaw and to stick to her initial goal of bringing her family to Havana, where they could live free of the pervasive anti-Semitism and poverty that surrounded them back home.

My mother, my sister and I spent a few months in Warsaw, trying to convince my grandparents, aunts, and uncles to come back with us to Cuba. Unfortunately, a deceptive improvement in the economic situation deterred my family from making that important decision. And, they were all reluctant to be a burden to my father in a distant country whose language they could not speak. The three of us returned to Havana without them, leaving Warsaw three months before Hitler invaded Poland!

KH: I hate to ask you about the aftermath. It sounds like the end was near for them.

SM: The end result is known to all. All my family perished in Auschwitz, where I paid tribute to their memory during a visit to Krakow, nearby, for summer master classes at the State Conservatory there. I find it curious that I, a Jew, would be invited to teach so near to where my ancestors were annihilated.

Ironically, I was also invited to give master classes at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Munich, whose building had been the headquarters of the Nazi Party in Germany, and where Hitler planned the annihilation of all European Jews.

KH: Incredible! Can we move away from all this tragedy and ask about your family's musical background, if any?

SM: Before I answer you, I want to clarify the difference between the Ashkenazi (Eastern European Jews who spoke Yiddish) and the Sephardim (Jews who emigrated from Spain and spoke mostly Ladino, the old Spanish of the Middle Ages).

Most of the Ashkenazi Jewish community was limited in education, but had great respect for knowledge and learning. Jews have been called “the people of the book.” In the segregated towns in Europe, the most important persons in the Jewish communities were the scholars or rabbis, who would study the *Talmud* and religious scripture all day long and make all the important decisions that faced the community.

So it was not surprising that my parents and many other members of the Cuban-Jewish community were very enthusiastic about my interest in art, music and singing. They supported it wholeheartedly, but they themselves could not participate in the cultural life of Havana as they lacked the background to do so.

My parents were not musically trained, that of course being a luxury, unthinkable under the conditions of their upbringing. My father was a good social dancer, something I witnessed at weddings and bar mitzvahs. He had a good sense of rhythm. I remember my mother singing melodies from Viennese operettas and old Jewish songs—she had a beautiful voice. After I learned to play the piano as a child, I enjoyed accompanying family and friends in the singing of that great body of music, so full of sentiment and pathos. There is no question that my Jewish background played a very important role in my development as a musician. I would like to come back to that subject later.

KH: *When was your own musicality first noticed?*

SM: The first signs of musicality were revealed through my singing of Latin American songs, which I did while I accompanied myself with a guitar that had been a gift when I was about five or six years old. I liked to sing. On various occasions, the director of a popular orchestra that played in an open air café right next to my father’s jewelry store, asked my father for permission to allow me to sing along with his musicians for the American tourists who were enjoying drinks outdoors.

Ana Rubinstein, my mother’s childhood friend, persuaded my parents that they should make the financial effort needed to buy me a piano, convinced as she was that I had musical talent. My parents trusted her because she was a rather sophisticated woman whose own daughter, Sara, became an excellent violinist, eventually joining the violin section of the Pittsburgh Symphony after immigrating to the United States. Her other daughter, Dolores, became an excellent actress.

KH: *Can you tell us about your experience with formal piano lessons?*

SM: They started at about age seven, at one of the private conservatories in the *Vedado* section of Havana. My recollection of those few lessons is not a pleasant one. I remember the teacher hitting my hands with a ruler. I did not stay with her very long. Soon thereafter, it was agreed to find the best possible teacher available.

KH: *Were there fine teachers in Havana at that time?*

SM: I remember two teachers who were considered. One was Harold Gramatges, who came to my house to meet me and my parents, probably in great need of students at that time. I now know that he was then a young Communist sympathizer who eventually became one of the leading Cuban composers. After the 1959 Revolution, he was Cuba's ambassador to France. Until his recent passing, he was a leading figure in Cuba's cultural and musical life and achieved international status. I had the honor of befriending him in recent years and my students have played his music.

KH: *Who was the other teacher your parents considered?*

SM: He was a Russian-Jewish immigrant by the name of Jasha Fisherman. He suggested to my parents that they take me out of the Spanish-Jewish elementary school I was attending so that I could devote more hours to practicing. Like many Jews trying to maintain their traditions in a foreign country, my parents were reluctant to follow that advice and decided to look further for a piano teacher. Interestingly, Jacob Lateiner, a superb pianist and teacher, was Mr. Fisherman's student before emigrating to the U.S. to study at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia.

Lateiner, who sadly passed away recently, was a colleague of mine in New York and eventually became a dear friend. Fisherman had another outstanding student, Rosario Andino, my childhood friend, who is currently living in the U.S and enjoying a successful performing career.

KH: *Was it frustrating to you to have to wait for your lessons until your parents found a teacher they liked?*

SM: I have no recollection of any frustration. The culmination of my parents' research and advice-gathering was that I became a student of César Pérez Sentenat. At that time, and for a long time thereafter, I knew little about his background. In later years, with a great deal of curiosity, I researched it in order to learn the roots of his pedagogical ideas.

KH: *What was his background?*

SM: He was born in Cuba and, like many other talented Cuban music students, traveled to Paris to further his studies. There, he became a student of Joaquín Nín, an excellent pianist and composer. Nín's songs are well known and often performed in concert.

KH: *I only have heard of Nín as a composer. As a pianist, did Nín have interesting roots?*

SM: Nín had been born in Havana and was sent at a young age to study in Barcelona with Carlos Vidiella, exposing him to the Catalan piano school which later produced Alicia de Larrocha. Nín also studied composition with Felipe Pedrell in Spain and with Vincent d'Indy at the *Schola Cantorum* in Paris. Most importantly, he became a student of

Moritz Moszkowski, a great pianist and wonderful composer of very attractive and effective *salon* pieces.

Moszkowski had been born in what is now Poland, had a Jewish-German background, was trained in Germany and eventually became a student of Franz Liszt. His international career was based in Paris where he died in 1925. Nín as well had an international career that placed him in great demand as a virtuoso pianist throughout Europe and South America. Near the end of his life, Nín returned to Cuba. I remember Sentenat bringing me to an audition with his teacher about one or two years after I had begun my lessons.

Nín was the editor of two important French publications compiling first editions of sonatas by Spanish composers who had been contemporaries and/or students of Domenico Scarlatti in Spain. Those included works by Soler, Matéo Albeniz, Casanovas and other Spanish *clavecinistas*. I was fortunate to have learned some of these sonatas during my early studies.

KH: What were the stylistic influences coming from a great pianist like Moszkowski, having such an interesting, mixed background?

SM: Moszkowski's Polish-Jewish temperament and upbringing, the discipline and profound musicianship acquired during his years of study in Germany, the pianistic virtuosity which Liszt personified, and the cultural and musical spirit of Paris in the midst of the great developments taking place under the influence of Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky—all contributed!

KH: How did these influences enter into your training?

SM: I remember Sentenat hand-writing exercises for me every week. These exercises were handed down from Liszt to Moszkowski, from Moszkowski to Nín, from Nín to Sentenat and from Sentenat to me. They were not published at that time, but they were Liszt's very own exercises that I was practicing, four generations removed. I remember that they were quite basic in terms of beautiful sound production, the dropping of the weight of the arm through the wrist to achieve it and the transferring of that weight from one note to the next. There were many other exercises for all kinds of technical challenges, including finger strength and clarity, scales, arpeggios, octaves, staccato, legato, etc. The actual publication of Liszt's technical approach did not take place until much later.

KH: Were these exercises and the way of conquering the technical challenges in them something that you could carry on in your playing and teaching later on?

SM: These technical principles were reviewed many years later by my Juilliard teacher, Sascha Gorodnitzki. Interestingly, Sentenat had inherited these ideas directly from Liszt via Moszkowski and Nín, while Gorodnitzki had received similar instruction by way of

an entirely different source, the Russian school, through his teacher Josef Lhévinne who had studied with Safonoff, a pupil of Leschetizky. Some of them are contained in Lhévinne's concise but very important *Basic Principles in Pianoforte Playing*. I urge all my students at least to read his article on "The Secret of a Beautiful Tone."

Under Sentenat, I used Moszkowski's book, *Scuola delle Doppie Note* (The School of Double Notes), published in Italy and available in Cuba. It had all kinds of scales, double notes and so forth. Scales in thirds had different fingerings from the ones I later learned with Gorodnitzki, who used Plaidy's and Joseffy's books on the same material.

KH: *You were obviously getting a very thorough foundation.*

SM: Sentenat was immersed in the best technical principles known at that time, coming from a great tradition that went all the way back to Liszt. He was also very serious about music interpretation and extremely score-oriented. He even made me pray before performing, to hopefully reproduce the composer's intentions. He also had me work intensively with Argeliers León in music theory and with Luis Pastoret in *sofège*. León was an important composer who later became one of the best known authorities on the African influence in Cuban music. I often consulted his books and articles while working on my doctoral dissertation. I am grateful to Professor Pastoret for developing my ability to sing and name the notes of the fastest passagework imaginable. It is unfortunate that music studies in the United States do not emphasize this important facet of musical training. It enables us to look at very complicated music and be able to hear it without playing it.

One important thing I remember about Sentenat was his attention to Bach, using the recordings of Wanda Landowska to support his ideas on the interpretation of Bach's music. In that regard, he was way ahead of his time, and I profited from it. Sentenat taught me to appreciate the greatness of Bach's music, to love and respect it. Later on, Gorodnitzki took equal interest in my approach to the handling of the instrument, this time deriving from the Russian School. Other elements such as personality, imagination and character projection not reflected in the score, did not come from Sentenat or Gorodnitzki, but came much later on from my exposure in New York to the influence of romantic pianists of the so-called "Golden Age," many of whom had emigrated from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania and Poland.

They all demonstrated to me what Gustav Mahler had stated: "*The most important thing about music is not found in the notes.*" I have misquoted him slightly for years, when I have paraphrased repeatedly to many of my students that "the score has everything . . . except the most important!" The meaning is the same!

KH: *What about the French influence?*

SM: Sentenat's association with Joaquín Nin was very rewarding, particularly with regard to the French repertoire. Both teacher and student were able to hear Debussy

perform live and also listen to the interpretations by Ricardo Viñes of the newly-composed piano music by Debussy and Ravel, who considered Viñes to be the ideal interpreter of their music. Sentenat was able to listen to the conversations that his teacher Nín had with Stravinsky, as the three of them walked along the boulevards of Paris.

All of that had a positive influence on my understanding of that important segment of the repertoire, and the particular traits of French culture which permeate the interpretation of French music. At an early age, I was not only playing works by Debussy and Ravel, but I was also learning pieces by Poulenc and Fauré, piano music that was at that time little known in other countries besides France.

KH: What other influences played an important role in your development as a musician?

SM: There were three other influences. Havana was an important city during Spanish Colonial times, and later on, as the capital of an independent country strategically located on the way to Latin America. The best Spanish musicians and dancers performed there. Having been born in Cuba gave me the opportunity to become totally immersed in their music from various regions of Spain, each with its own character.

KH: Was Flamenco part of this music?

SM: Very much so, and it was especially attractive. The melismatic *Canto Hondo* singing of the *cantaor*, accompanied by the rhythmic clapping of the troupe, the savage dancing and exciting foot tapping, the choreographic sexual connotations, the poetry which permeated the text in every song in which the music was based, all of that had a great influence on me, and I believe has qualified me to teach the great Spanish repertoire of Albéniz, Granados, Falla and other wonderful Spanish composers to my international students, most of them unfamiliar with this exciting and compelling literature.

KH: I could not agree more. For me it was a very special discovery that has become an important part of my repertoire. You might remember your pride in learning of my winning the Alicia de Larrocha Spanish prize at the Andorra competition.

SM: Of course I do. The fact that you are Korean and played it with more Spanish flavor than the many Spanish contestants who participated in that competition was a great accomplishment.

KH: You mentioned two more influences.

SM: Cuban music was influenced also by the input of the African men and women who were unjustly enslaved by the Spanish colonial armies. They were brought to Cuba and other parts of Latin America at gunpoint from their African homelands, just as it happened in the United States.

In Cuba, the native Indians, called *Tainos*, whom Columbus and his men had encountered, were very weak and did not survive the daily routine of working endless hours at trying to extract non-existent gold from the rivers. They were replaced by African slaves, who revolted in the 19th century and became free.

The Africans had brought with them the percussion instruments used in their aboriginal music, with its complicated and exciting rhythms that eventually became the most important element of Cuban music. It is hard to imagine any place in the world where the latter has not inspired people to dance and move voluptuously under the spell of its beat.

KH: *What was the third influence?*

SM: My Jewish background. That permeates everything! The most specific example comes from my exposure to the violin playing of a Jewish beggar who attended as many weddings and *bar mitzvahs* as he could in order to get alms from the guests. In spite of the poor quality of his instrument, he played Jewish melodies with intense pathos and sense of *rubato*, vividly demonstrating the special ingredients central to the understanding of this music.

Other influences in this regard came from listening to great Jewish folk singers like Theodor Bikel. I brought some of these recordings to Havana during my early years of study in New York. My mother's favorite songs from the Old World were *Beltz, mein Shtetele Beltz* and *A tudes do Mame*, which I played thousands of times at home for my parents and their guests to sing along. My prowess as a performer of this music was all that was needed for me to be considered "great". I can tell you that playing a Beethoven sonata is less difficult than getting to the bottom of this style.

I had an interesting experience in that respect. I bought two LP recordings of Jewish songs to bring as gifts to my mother. One featured a famous Jewish folk singer whose name escapes me. The other featured the great American tenor, Jan Peerce, who was a cantor in a synagogue before becoming a world famous opera star. My mother preferred the folk singer much more. She was not enthusiastic about Mr. Peerce's Italian operatic style which was too vocally perfect and sophisticated to connect with this music. Regarding the interpretation of Spanish, African-Cuban and Jewish music, I could say that you either have it or you don't! I have always felt comfortable dancing, singing, performing and even teaching this music.

KH: *We all know you as a fine classical musician. Just how did this music fit into your developing musical life?*

SM: I was fortunate to be a good dancer. Rhythm had excited me from early on. Eventually, as a teenager, I had my own band, with a funny name: *Polaconga*. This was an abbreviation of two words combined, *polaco* (that was the way Cubans referred to any Ashkenazi Jew regardless of whether they came from Poland or from anywhere else in Europe) and *conga* (which was one of the fastest and most exciting Cuban dances). Since

we were all young Jewish kids playing mostly Cuban and Jewish music at parties, weddings, and bar mitzvahs, *Polaconga* was all-embracing.

KH: *It is hard to picture you in a band playing popular music!*

SM: I was able to do this because of my special gift for improvisation and an ear that led me to make my own arrangements of any popular song, not only Cuban, but also Latin American, eastern European and Polish-Russian Jewish music. So wherever there was a piano in a party or celebration, I would be asked to sit and play while anyone with musical instincts around me would start singing and clapping the rhythms on wooden furniture or anything else they could put their hands on.

KH: *If you did this without having lessons in this music, was there a person or a performing group that you used as a model?*

SM: We all belonged to a beach club near my home where two orchestras performed every Sunday evening. One of the Cuban orchestras was called *Sonora Matanzera*, which became extremely famous worldwide and sold millions of records. The pianist was a tall black man, Lino Frías, very elegant and distinguished looking, next to whom I would stand for hours and hours, enraptured by the artistry of his improvisations.

KH: *Was he aware of your musical ability?*

SM: I was lucky that he was willing to listen to me doing my own improvisations. Surprisingly, he asked me on various occasions to substitute for him and, to this day, I consider it a great honor that I actually played with the *Sonora Matanzera*. Lovers of Latin music who might read this dissertation will understand how exciting it must have been for a teenager to sit at the piano backed up by this excellent group while hundreds of couples danced on a large terrace.

KH: *Did you have any personal influences?*

SM: I cannot fail to mention the important role that Luís Amado-Blanco played in the early stages of my development. When I moved to a private house in the Miramar section of Havana as a teenager, I befriended two brothers, Germán and Raul, who were his sons and lived across the street. When I began to visit their home, I discovered that the father was a great lover of singing, particularly opera, and had an incredible collection of 78 rpm and LP recordings of the great singers of the Golden Age.

KH: *Did vocal music have any special influence on you?*

SM: I used to spend all day long on weekends and during vacations listening (and singing along!) to arias recorded by Enrico Caruso, Tito Schipa, Ferruccio Tagliavini, Giuseppe di Stefano, Beniamino Gigli and Titta Ruffo, just to mention a few among the Italian male singers; Ernestina Schumann-Heink and Elizabeth Schwartzkopf among the *lieder*

singers; and so many others from many nationalities in opera, operetta and Spanish zarzuelas.

KH: *Did you ever think about becoming a singer? Did that music tie in with your piano development in any way?*

SM: At one point, I could sing an entire opera, regardless of the masculine or feminine roles, while inventing my own Italian-sounding but meaningless words. I cannot stress enough what this experience did to me in my pianistic development in terms of understanding the vocal implications of a melody and the breathing involved, as well as the important role played by the “effort” in reaching high notes, whether in a passive way (falsetto, like a lyric singer), or with full voice (like a dramatic one).

KH: *Piano students seldom have such a broad musical perspective.*

SM: I remember later on during my first couple of years in New York, attending performances of operas at the Old Met, accompanied by a Cuban voice student whose last name was Negrete. He was always amazed by the fact that I could identify the exact name of any note when any of the singers sang high notes at the top of their *tessitura*. He thought I was showing off but, to my delight, he decided to check me out and look at the scores back home after a performance. In no time he realized that I had perfect pitch and could place any sound I heard on the corresponding key of a piano. I could also do that with the individual notes in chords.

KH: *Perfect pitch is supposed to be a very useful tool. Was it for you?*

SM: This phenomenon of perfect pitch was so natural to me that I was surprised at the fact that in Juilliard, my fellow classmates admired me for it. I must now confess that having a good ear plus the ability to improvise and to play by ear was a disruptive factor in my development. Why? It made me very lazy toward note-reading and serious practice.

KH: *How could this ability to play by ear negatively impact your daily practicing?*

SM: After swimming in the morning at the nearby beach, I was expected to practice at least a couple of hours before lunch. Instead of reading the scores of the music assigned by Sentenat, I would spend hours improvising classically-sounding music, which neither my parents nor the housemaid (supposedly checking on me while my parents were out) could tell was not written by either Beethoven or Chopin!

KH: *Most students try to please their teachers. How could you be different?*

SM: Sentenat scolded me very often. At many lessons, I was just sloppily sight-reading the music I had not practiced. Unfortunately, he spoiled me so much with his praise and admiration for my talent that it only took a little bit of effort on my part for him to be

satisfied. This went on for years. I later realized that I could have accomplished much more, had I been challenged and inspired to work seriously.

KH: *Does that student experience of yours influence the way you teach?*

SM: Yes, that is exactly why I get so upset when I have a lazy student! My desire for perfection and for the utmost discipline in the learning of the text, the fingering, the composer's markings, etc., is dictated by my preoccupation with preventing my students from wasting their time, as I did.

KH: *Your teacher Sentenat must have been frustrated, wanting you to be a good student. Knowing what you know now, what do you think was lacking in his approach?*

SM: In all those years my teacher never encouraged me to attend a concert nor took the initiative to take me to one himself. The greatest artists were performing in Havana and I was not even aware of it. All I needed was a vivid example of what a great artist can accomplish, of the beauty that can be achieved by working seriously. Everyone kept telling me that I was a genius, that no one could play like me, and I could not realize how wrong they all were. I was not surrounded by a critical environment.

KH: *Your parents no doubt trusted your teacher and probably never imagined any problem.*

SM: A lot of this has to do with my upbringing. As I mentioned before, my parents did not really have the opportunity to have an education. They appreciated my doing well in school and the great success I appeared to have with my piano, but they could not make judgments, or lead me into whatever cultural *milieu* that Havana had to offer.

KH: *Considering the life that they had left behind in Europe, they must have been very proud of what you had already achieved, giving you an opportunity they never had for themselves.*

SM: For my parents and their friends at that time, the most important thing was for their children to preserve their Jewish heritage in a foreign environment. My parents and their friends were all surviving by way of business enterprises that allowed them to eventually live a comfortable life, but far removed from the cultural pursuits of the intellectual elite among Cuban musicians, writers, artists, etc.

KH: *What do you feel was the most important element that you were missing at the time?*

SM: Little did I know that there was actually an intellectual Jewish community in Havana far removed from my environment. Some of them were German Jews who immigrated as a result of the Second World War. They looked down at the Eastern European Jews because of their lack of education. Conversely, Eastern European Jews felt that the

German Jews did not seem to live and act in a way compatible with their own Jewish traditions.

Others were Jewish Sephardim whose contributions were unfortunately unknown to the Ashkenazi Jews that surrounded me.

On recent trips to Havana I visited the Jewish cemetery in the outskirts of the city. I can now, so many years later, look at the burial places of many Cuban Jews who I realize were very involved with intellectual pursuits. I feel so sorry that my life and theirs did not interchange during my childhood years. I even had my own periods of “Jewish anti-Semitism” as I associated Jewish people only with the buying and selling of goods, bargaining when purchasing any item (something rather shocking for Cubans) and an obsession with making sure that the young people kept their Jewish identity.

KH: My own perception in New York has been that the Jewish influence on culture seems to be a broad and a rich one. Did coming to New York change your opinion?

SM: Of course, upon my arrival in New York at age 18 I soon realized that cultural institutions in this city could not survive were it not for Jewish contributions, both intellectual and financial. Cuba could have profited from a large input of intellectual and professional Jews who arrived at Havana’s port in 1943 on the St. Louis boat. A book has been written and a movie has been made about this tragic episode. The passengers had used every resource left in their possession to purchase a place on that boat, hoping to disembark in Havana to escape Nazi persecution in the middle of the Second World War.

KH: Why couldn’t they disembark in the United States? Many years had passed since the days of the Depression.

SM: President Roosevelt had heard pleas from the Jewish community in the United States about giving permission for the 930 Jews on that boat to disembark in an American port. Again, labor unrest, because of unemployment and a general negative attitude towards immigrants, prompted Roosevelt to refuse Jewish applicants for immigration visas, even when they were in danger. Keeping to the same policy, he denied permission for the boat to dock here. As I mentioned before, Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Prize winner, recounted all the horrible details of this doomed voyage in a lecture I attended at the 92nd Street Y in New York.

KH: If the United States denied landing rights to the boat, why did Cuba do likewise?

SM: The Cuban government at that time was a rightist regime that sympathized with Hitler and was also influenced in its decision by articles and editorials that appeared in the leading rightist newspaper, *El Diario de la Marina*. When no Cuban permission was given for the Jews to disembark, some of them threw themselves into the water in the port of Havana and perished.

The captain of the boat, a German citizen who tried the utmost to find a place that would accept the Jewish passengers, sent cables to the heads of government of various countries in Latin America, to no avail. Eventually, the boat had to return to Europe and it is known that most of its human cargo eventually perished in Nazi concentration camps.

KH: Did the Cuban authorities have any conception of the value of those people, the possible resource for Cuba's future that they were turning away?

SM: Before I respond, I wish to point out that I, a Cuban Jew, was later awarded two scholarships by two Cuban governments to continue my studies in the United States. That contrasts totally with the attitude of the Cuban government in 1943, which was an exception to the normally generous attitude of Cuba and Cubans towards its Jewish population.

I find it incomprehensible for Cuba to deny a place to highly educated and professional people who would have made a great cultural contribution to the country in 1943. The same thing happened in 1492 in Spain. Instead of using the Jewish intelligentsia to help with the structuring and colonization of the newly discovered lands in America, the Jews were expelled from Spain at that crucial moment. The result is that Spanish power and importance in the world began to diminish afterwards. Its legacy in Latin America was repressive and destructive.

KH: It is inspiring for me to observe your coming to terms with your background, as a Cuban and as a Jew, relating your life to historical events that took place so long ago.

SM: I was present in 1992 at an event commemorating the discovery of America 500 years before, held at the *Palau de la Música* where so many of my students have performed as winners of the Maria Canals International Competition in Barcelona. A recent Spanish Nobel Prize winner in literature, Camilo José Cela, prepared a speech that was read by a very famous Spanish actress. There he clearly stated that the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 was one of the greatest historical mistakes ever made. When one thinks not only of Spain but also of Latin America, including Cuba where I was born, one cannot but agree that the participation of Spanish Jews in the colonization of Latin America could have been a beneficial influence.

KH: What about the Cuban revolution? How did it impact your life?

SM: Whatever one's attitude towards the Cuban revolution, the fact is that such revolutions are nothing else but a desire to find a new and better way to eradicate the corruption, repression and ignorance that has existed in Latin America for more than 500 years. All these milestones: the expulsion of Jews from Spain, the denial of the St. Louis refugees to immigrate into Cuba, and the Cuban revolution itself, have had a profound impact in my own life and that is why I bring these subjects into this biographical

dissertation.

KH: *When you had reached your teen years, were you by now on a firm course of musical and artistic development?*

SM: No, and I am convinced that time wasted cannot be recovered. I already mentioned my deceptive practice habits during my formative years. I regret them immensely. I spent my free days at the beach club, chasing girls (in spite of my shyness) and going from one party to another.

KH: *Were there other ways that you were not following your parents' guidance?*

SM: It was precisely my desire to break the rules restricting my social life, that made me seek friends among the non-Jewish intellectual community.

KH: *I understand that before the revolution, Havana was a great entertainment center for foreign tourists. Was there any serious concert activity there among the attractions? What was eventually available to you?*

SM: By the time that I was about 15 or 16 years old, friends like the Amado-Blancos and Pedro Machado, a music critic who became one of my best friends, introduced me to the musical and cultural life that I needed so badly to nurture my own artistic aspirations. Among the highlights, I still remember a performance of *Tristan und Isolde* conducted by Clemens Kraus, with Kirsten Flagstad and Set Svanholm in the leading roles. I also attended concerts by Havana's *Orquesta Filarmónica* conducted by Erich Kleiber. Amazingly, the concertmaster (Alexander Prilutchi), the first cellist (Adolfo Odnoposoff, a student of Casals) and the first violist (Wolfgang Granat) were all Jewish refugees who enhanced the quality of the Cuban orchestra so much so that it probably became, for a number of years, one of the best orchestras in Latin America, with a standard high enough for a conductor of the stature of Erich Kleiber to remain and reside in Havana for a number of years as its chief conductor.

Other conductors included Fabien Sevitsky and Igor Markevitch. As to soloists and recitalists, I attended concerts by Jasha Heifetz, Artur Rubinstein, Alexander Brailovsky, *Societa Corelli*, *I Musici*, Elizabeth Schwarkopf, Nathan Milstein and so many other great artists. Prokofieff had performed his newly-composed piano works in a recital in Havana in 1925, long before I was born. Horowitz premiered the Barber Sonata there two weeks before its first American performance in Carnegie Hall.

KH: *Where did these concerts take place?*

SM: They took place at the auditorium currently named *Amadéo Roldán* in honor of an early 20th century Cuban composer who died of leukemia at age 31. As a teenager, I always sat in the balcony. Many years later, in the year 2000, I was invited to be a member of the jury of the *Ignacio Cervantes International Piano Competition* in Havana.

Ignacio Cervantes was the leading 19th Cuban composer, about whom I wrote my doctoral dissertation at Columbia University, which was published in Cuba in an abridged Spanish version.

In that competition, in the same theater and sitting again in the balcony with fellow juror Viktor Merzhanov and others, I enjoyed listening to my own student, Yuan Sheng, perform the Chopin F Minor Concerto on the same stage where I had heard so many great artists a few decades earlier. What an experience! He went on to win the first prize with a performance as beautiful as I could possibly ever imagine. It elicited many encores!

KH: During your formative years, had you any foresight of the distinguished musical future that was ahead of you?

SM: In spite of the fact that my musical talent was recognized and praised by the world that surrounded me, I was never sure that I was going to pursue music as my profession. During my high school years, I contemplated becoming an architect, a medical doctor (I fainted when I witnessed an operation by accident in a Havana hospital) and I even studied one year of optometry at the University of Havana.

KH: Narrowing down all these choices to a choice of music, to a concentration on the piano, to a specialization in teaching and finally to becoming the master teacher we all know, must have been a long search, full of discoveries for you. How do you remember it beginning to take a definite shape?

SM: I think it begins during my high school years at the Havana Military Academy. My parents enrolled me in that school trying to instill some discipline in me. The discipline I learned there has allowed me to survive the many pressures I have encountered in my life.

KH: In addition to the discipline, did you find the Academy intellectually stimulating?

SM: I was very lazy about paying attention to the teachers as my mind would wander in class. By my second day there, I was completely lost.

KH: Then the Academy itself was not an intellectual inspiration.

SM: The educational system in Cuba at that time was based on a textbook for every course. Memorization played an important role in doing well on the exams. Germán Amado-Blanco was my classmate and friend. The way that Germán and I were able to “survive” and even get excellent grades was by sitting together for three days before the exams, getting very little sleep, and reading every paragraph in the textbooks over and over again.

KH: Did you derive anything positive from that experience?

SM: I now believe it was then that I first became a teacher! The method we adopted was as follows: I would read a paragraph out loud and discuss it with Germán. From his comments, I would immediately realize what he did or did not understand. Explaining the subject matter to him out loud was crucial in making him learn it and for me to remember it as a result of my explanations.

KH: *Were you discovering through that method that you actually had a talent for teaching?*

SM: It doesn't matter that Germán was not my piano student. The fact is that good teachers are the ones who understand and realize what information is needed by the student in order to surmount the task at hand. I know that any piano student who plays for ten excellent teachers would get many wonderful suggestions on what he or she needs to do in order to improve a performance. The question is not whether those ideas are useful. It is the order in which they are presented that can make a difference in the quality of the outcome. You cannot deal with everything at the same time. A teacher has to choose what must be done first and then, second, etc.

KH: *So at the time, you were not thinking about being a piano teacher; you were just finding ways to solve the problem of the moment. What was the next step in your musical progression?*

SM: One interesting facet in my decision to pursue a musical career had to do with the opportunity it gave me to leave my home, come to the United States, and be my own boss. I really wanted to have freedom. I liked the American system where students attend college far away from where they live. It was different than in Cuba, where young people always lived with their families until they got married.

KH: *Eventually you came to New York to continue your musical education. Did New York become your destination by chance, or had it been in your thoughts for a while?*

SM: Let me answer that first with a little background: the attraction to leave home was not just important musically, but also had much to do with my strong food preferences. I was seldom satisfied with what I ate at home. I cannot stress enough how annoyed I was every time I sat down for lunch or dinner and had to ask what the menu was. For whatever reason, I love to try out new things, to eat dishes from different countries every day and treat food as if it were a cultural experience. It is!

This problem was so pervasive that my mother had a very hard time making me like the food that she cooked. That was a limitation on my part as it has turned out that many of her Eastern European Jewish dishes are now a great source of pleasure whenever I am willing to break my diet and enjoy them. But, as a child, I would barely taste the dishes in front of me in our dining room, enjoying much more having lunch or dinner at a restaurant.

My mother worried a lot because I was very skinny and always looked undernourished. I had been a sickly child, having been infected with a dangerous disease by a food vendor. I do not know nor understand the whole story, but I know that on the boat to Cuba from Poland, I almost died. To my mother, my being fat and being healthy was one and the same thing. Little did she know that she was actually slowly killing me every time she had *kreplach* soup or a juicy steak on the menu!

KH: *What about your famous croquettes?*

SM: Right. Very often, in the middle of the night, when my parents were asleep, I would leave my home and take a bus for almost a one-hour ride, in order to reach an all-night restaurant that made delicious Cuban croquettes to which I was addicted. Needless to say, upon my return home, my parents would rightfully scold me for doing such a crazy thing at a time when I should be sleeping.

Now, back to your question and, as crazy as it sounds, those croquettes actually played a role in my decision to come to New York to study piano. On one occasion during a vacation, I visited New York and found a Cuban restaurant on Eighth Avenue and 50th Street where the same croquettes were being served. Well . . . only a career in music which required immigration to New York rather than studying at Havana University was going to allow me to eat croquettes at any time of the day or night, and to eat a dish from a different country every day. It may sound silly or ridiculous but it is true!

KH: *So, New York had more than one attraction for you! Still, I know what it means to be far away from your family. Was that difficult for you?*

SM: My mother took too much care of me. As a result, I suffered many embarrassments in front of my classmates in elementary school. At ten o'clock in the morning, when we had a break, my mother would show up having walked up four flights of stairs in spite of her varicose veins, just to bring me a glass of orange juice. I felt all my classmates were laughing at me behind my back!

The worst outcome of all of that exaggerated care was my image in front of any female classmate I was in love with at the time. It was different each year. I remember them all: Sarita, during kindergarten; Julieta, during first, second and third years; Elenita, during the fourth and fifth grades; and finally Cila, during my sixth and last grade in elementary school. At that point, the orange juice deliveries stopped but my love for a new female classmate did not. That went on and on and on and it had a disruptive effect on my piano practice.

Like me, these girls were all Jewish, born and raised in Cuba. When my social contacts began to expand outside of the realm of the Jewish community, I began to have these relationships with non-Jewish Cuban female students. I enjoyed so much being the rebel that dared to break the rules carefully delineated by my parents. Being away from home gave me freedom. Eventually, while studying at Juilliard, I met Sara at the International

House, who, among other things, attracted me because, on the one hand, she was not Jewish and, on the other hand, her Spanish-Cuban background allowed us to share our cultural heritage. We have been together ever since.

KH: Let's go back to Cuba. How did your path to New York unfold from the beginning?

SM: My first recital took place at the so-called Lyceum Lawn Tennis Club in Havana at age nine or ten. The concert grand piano was a Blüthner, one of the best brands in the world then. My recital must have made an emotional impact as the photos taken at the time show members of the audience crying in admiration. Other concerts and performances later on were restricted to events having to do with Cuban-Jewish affairs where my contribution was sought.

KH: There must have been a musical "establishment" of some kind in Havana. Were you able to attract any important attention?

SM: I played my last public recital at age seventeen. This time the audience included a number of critics who seemed to have been attracted by a certain reputation my playing had generated. The outcome was that seven of the leading critics, all distinguished literary figures in Havana's intellectual life, decided to have a meeting and seek an audience on my behalf with the First Lady of the country at that time.

KH: What was the result of their intervention?

SM: Their encouragement and that of the press led me to participate in a national competition sponsored by the Ministry of Education. I was selected as the winner among the many talented pianists who participated. The standards for a competition in Cuba have always been high and one should take into consideration that Cuba, a small island, has produced great pianists and musicians. As a result, I was given a scholarship for studies abroad, which eventually allowed me to come to New York and pursue my studies here.

The amount of scholarship was rather small, not enough to sustain a student in this expensive city, which led to the granting of a parallel privately endowed scholarship. Both scholarships plus a third one from the Juilliard School received later on, were the determining factor in my decision to come to New York.

KH: Students pursuing studies abroad often have a specific teacher in mind. Did you?

SM: It was not my original intention to apply to the Juilliard School nor study with Gorodnitzki while I was still in Havana. One of Sentenat's former students, Santos Ojeda, had just been appointed to the Juilliard Precollege Division faculty and had an excellent reputation as a teacher. Some of my Cuban contacts among pianists had studied with him and were raving about his pedagogical attributes.

KH: *Did you make contact with him?*

SM: It so happens that he was invited by the Pro-Arte Society to give a recital in Havana at that time. He accepted my family's invitation to visit us at our home so that he would have the opportunity to audition me. All those former students of his had confirmed that the tuition for each lesson was ten dollars. It was required that each student take two lessons per week. When my father made his calculations as to how much money I needed per month in addition to the scholarships awarded, the tuition for the lessons was an important part of his budget.

KH: *You must have been excited!*

SM: To the contrary! Suddenly, during that meeting, all my dreams came apart! When we politely asked Mr. Ojeda what would be the tuition for a lesson, instead of quoting ten dollars as expected, he quoted fifteen!

For my parents, it was a very difficult situation. They could easily bargain when buying a suit or a bedspread. But dealing with an established well-mannered professor was beyond their life experience. So it was for me, the shy young boy, who had to save the day. I did it with elegance and an awareness of the touchy and sensitive subject. I was able to convey my concern that my dreams would be shattered if our budget did not meet the expense involved in the extra cost of the piano lessons. The end result was that the lessons were reduced to ten dollars, which at that time was no small amount. Just to give you an idea, my parents had previously paid an average of ten dollars a month for two lessons per week to Sentenat, the leading teacher in Cuba.

KH: *It seems that you had taken control of your life at a critical time. I think there is a lesson here.*

SM: Up to that moment I can assure the readers who know me that I was the shyest human being on earth you could imagine. I was a typical introspective young boy who kept his thoughts to himself and did not share them with anybody else. This trait extended to my social relationships with girls, to the point that I always failed to express my feelings to them.

That experience with Mr. Ojeda changed me forever! I don't think my parents were ever so proud of me as they were on that day. For people who have been persecuted for so many centuries and who have survived when other major civilizations, like the Greek and Roman empires, have perished, it is of the utmost importance for parents to see in their children the talent and capability of surviving in their own world. I had to deal with the issue and resolve it.

KH: *Was the last obstacle now out of the way?*

SM: Yes. I came to New York in 1955. At that time, I didn't think about any school, I just thought about improving my piano playing through lessons with Mr. Ojeda. But being in New York, I immediately found out that Juilliard was the only prominent music school in the city at that time. The Manhattan School of Music was a small school on the east side; it did not yet have the international reputation that it has today.

I shared my plans with Mr. Ojeda and this was a very painful thing to do, as he had developed a wonderful chemistry with me as a student. He had great hopes that I would be somebody to bring honors to his teaching. I asked him whom he would recommend as a teacher in the College division and he immediately suggested Gorodnitzki.

KH: *What did Gorodnitzki's name mean to you at that time?*

SM: Ojeda himself had been through some problems with his own teacher, Rosina Lhévinne. Gorodnitzki came from the same Russian background and had also been a student of Josef Lhévinne, the husband of Rosina. Fortunately, I had heard Gorodnitzki's recordings in Cuba, and I knew he had played concerts in Havana. At that time, I was proud to study with someone who was recorded, and his was a name that I recognized and respected.

I recall him being very excited during my audition. After entering Juilliard, I made a lot of progress. Most importantly, Gorodnitzki introduced me to the Russian School and I began to learn how to practice. He was a super virtuoso and the winner of the coveted Schubert Prize. His recordings, as impressive as they are, do not really do justice to the beauty that we, his students, were able to hear during our lessons.

As a teacher, he was a perfectionist. I admired him then and I still do today, preserving great memories of his patience and his interest in me and my future. However, I do have reservations about my development under him.

KH: *You say "reservations." Were there problems?*

SM: Gorodnitzki was a pianist who taught what he played. He represented the Russian school at its best and, like his teacher, he emphasized the pianistic control of the instrument, about which I learned a lot from him. He did not go deeply into the music. He had specific ideas as to how to play each piece. As I look back, the results were beautiful but rather impersonal. He often repeated the word "even" as I was interpreting a work. His goal was a rounded phrase, without bumps or corners. He had been a pupil of Josef Lhévinne. Lhévinne, Rachmaninoff and Josef Hofmann were the most famous *virtuosi* of the previous generation, all three different from one another.

There was, of course, the "other" school. Pianists such as Schnabel, Solomon and Hess were admired by a smaller but very sophisticated audience. Lhévinne was the most elegant and technically perfect exponent of the great Russian pianistic tradition. Among those three *virtuosi*, one could say that Lhévinne had the best taste—he would not

indulge in some of the rhythmic distortions prevalent in Hofmann's or Rachmaninoff's interpretations. On the other hand, his playing lacked their unique personality.

KH: You are saying that Gorodnitzki was conservative about expression in his teaching?

SM: During those years, I felt that Gorodnitzki made me nervous. I was never able to feel comfortable trying to play the way he played. Not having much experience, I did believe at that time that his playing was so perfect and beautiful that it should be my goal. It was much later, when I really started listening to pianists like Shura Cherkassky and Benno Moiseiwitsch, that I realized I had been in a strait-jacket for all those years. In order for me to express myself in my music, I had to forget about rules and realize that a personal statement might be something that some people might not like, but it is nevertheless "my" music: that is how I wanted to play, and that is how I want my students to feel when they play!

KH: Then your manner of teaching is not a method that you adopted from your former teachers!

SM: In a way, my teaching has been a rebellion against the system of "sit down at the piano and play it like me." You can never play like a teacher, because a teacher will always play better in his way: he knows exactly what he wants for himself and, if you imitate, no matter how hard you try, it is still an imitation. No one can imitate perfectly, and what would be the point? Every person is different, and every pianist is different. If the audience wanted the same thing every time, they would stay home and listen to recordings. Every great artist has something new and special to offer.

KH: In addition to Gorodnitzki, did anyone else on the Juilliard faculty have an impact on your development?

SM: I have very positive memories of Vincent Persichetti, my composition teacher at Juilliard. When Shostakovich and Kabalevsky came to the States in 1959, Persichetti asked me to play his music for them. Before I studied with him, I studied music theory with Arnold Fish, not as flamboyant a composer but a very organized teacher who, sadly, died very young.

Persichetti would sit at the piano and improvise in the style of any composer. In that way, he made us understand the compositional thought process of every composer at the moment of creation. Those who knew him and heard him improvise, felt that his non-improvised music, carefully planned and written down, was not as inspiring as the music that he improvised. But I remember hearing his 6th Symphony, recorded by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and I was very touched by this work.

He was a very good composer who is somehow not performed much today. Maybe the reason for that is the music is too conservative. At that time, conservative composers such as Persichetti, Mennin, William Schumann and others of that generation, were

thought of as the ones whose music was going to remain in the repertoire, something that is true only to a certain extent. They were the contemporary composers reaching the audiences, and were keeping music alive for future generations.

On the other side were the really *avant-garde* composers, doing the craziest things with tape recorders, electronics and all kinds of experimentation with sound, which no one except the composers themselves wanted to hear. Gradually, there has been a tremendous change in that attitude, especially among the younger generation of concert attendees. They want to hear these kinds of sounds.

The New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera House, established institutions, are watching their audiences become older, and worry about how to replace them. I bring attention to this matter because I am convinced that it is impossible for young pianists today to contemplate a career unless they are willing to explore and perform far-ranging repertoire. A perfect example is Columbia University's Miller Theater, a performance venue which was unable to attract enough audience by way of fairly well established artists performing standard repertoire. Eventually, they resolved this problem by inviting George Steele to become the artistic director. He invited contemporary composers to speak about their music, mixing contemporary music concerts with music from the pre-Baroque eras. That place became packed, full of young people.

KH: *What about chamber music?*

SM: I was fortunate to study an important segment of this beautiful literature with Louis Persinger, the famous American violin teacher of Yehudi Menuhin and Ruggiero Ricci. He was also a skilled pianist and paid as much attention to me as to the instrumentalists assigned.

I have a little story to tell you that is almost embarrassing. I was assigned to play piano and violin sonatas with a young classmate. After hearing me play on the first day of rehearsal, the classmate asked me: "Are you Solomon the pianist?"

"Yes, I am," I replied. It did not stop there; he then told me that he had heard "my" recording of the Beethoven 4th Concerto with the BBC Symphony! At that point, I should have informed this naïve young man that I was not the Solomon to whom he was referring, the great British pianist we all know. Instead, I asked him: "Which recording did you hear? The new one or the old one?" This went on for a couple of months before he finally found out that I was not "Solomon the pianist."

KH: *You mean to say that so early on you were already using humor to deal with people to the point of pulling their leg, as you have enjoyed doing with your students?*

SM: Yes. I always warn my students not to take me seriously outside of lessons, and even then . . . !

KH: *Did you ever take a course on conducting? I know that you like to conduct when you teach. You often ask us to conduct the music we are learning to an imaginary orchestra.*

SM: I took orchestral and choral conducting. I had a unique opportunity to conduct in class the first few pages of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, having none other than my classmate Itzhak Perlman as soloist! I believe that my experience conducting Schubert's 5th Symphony and Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat* did me a lot of good in developing my sense of balance and cross rhythms. After all, the piano is an orchestra!

KH: *I know that you enjoy conducting two-piano rehearsals of piano concerti.*

SM: I used to accompany my students even after I began to notice problems with my right hand. I accompanied Toshiko Mamiya, Jovianney Emmanuel Cruz and Aaron Shorr in a Mozart concerto, the Rachmaninoff *Paganini Variations* and the Tchaikovsky *Concerto No. 1* in one class meeting.

I felt so able to control the *tempi* that I missed the opportunity to witness the momentary decisions made by the soloists on their own with a student accompanist who would just follow them. Even if I could, I would not accompany any more. From a pedagogical point of view, being a listener is best.

KH: *Were there any unpleasant experiences during your studies at Juilliard?*

SM: As I look back, I am shocked by the aggressiveness and lack of ethics demonstrated by some teachers when trying to attract a student from another class.

KH: *Did you experience that yourself?*

SM: Yes. In one case, I went to the studio of a very important and famous teacher to accompany her student, who was entering the school's concerto competition with the Beethoven *Concerto No. 3*. As expected, I skipped the long introduction and went right into the few measures that precede the soloist's entrance.

Instead of spending the time working with her student, the teacher asked me to start from the beginning of the introduction and proceeded to spend the whole lesson on it. This teacher had praised my playing on a previous occasion, and now she was trying to impress me by teaching music that was not going to be performed during the competition.

KH: *You have spoken in the past of the difficulties that you faced because of political changes in Cuba during your studies at Juilliard.*

SM: The next huge event, in the middle of my music education, was the revolution in Cuba and Castro coming into power.

KH: *Was it safe there for your family?*

SM: There was a new government in Cuba. It was safe for anyone who did not have a former police connection or a criminal record. There was no persecution or anti-Semitism.

It was a socialist system with no more privately owned businesses. Jewelry, as an industry in a poor country with a socialist economy, faced a very uncertain future. My father, owning a jewelry store and wanting to continue in the business he knew, sought immigration to Miami, where there was already a Cuban community. Most of his friends were going there to try to reestablish themselves. He would be starting all over again, and he would have to support his family.

KH: *Were you able to remain at Juilliard?*

SM: I was on scholarship from the previous government. At first, my Cuban scholarship was eliminated by the Castro government, to be scrutinized for any political context, but then it was quickly reinstated. I was a well thought of pianist with established credentials in Cuba and everyone recognized that I had earned the scholarship on merit. I had no problem keeping it.

Unfortunately, the relationship between Cuba and the United States deteriorated so quickly that when the United States stopped buying Cuban sugar, Cuba had no more American dollars to send to me for that scholarship. At that point, they wanted me to continue my studies at the Moscow Conservatory, which is where most of the talented young musicians from Cuba were beginning to go for their studies.

KH: *Did you consider doing that?*

SM: No. The reason I didn't want to go to Moscow was very simple: although my political sympathies were with the Cuban revolution, we were in the middle of the Cold War; we didn't know if or when it would end. My parents were going to go to America and, if I studied in Moscow, there was the possibility that I would never see my family again. Besides, why would I want to continue my Russian School training in Moscow when I had the best Russian teacher in New York? Most important was the food (there were no Cuban croquettes in Moscow at that time)! What I really wanted was to bring my German piano from Havana to New York, as I could not afford to buy one here at a time when I was losing my Cuban scholarship and my family was emigrating to Miami.

KH: *Was the government upset that you were declining the offer to study in the Soviet Union?*

SM: I sought permission to defer the decision until I had completed my master's degree at Juilliard, with only one more year until graduation. Since I had no piano of my own, I

requested permission to bring my piano to New York to help me with the practicing required.

This request was denied, of course, as it was of the utmost importance for Cuba to keep its instruments. The American embargo, just established, would make it difficult for Cuba to import them in the future. That has been the case up until this very day. I had a meeting about all these matters in Havana with the Cultural Attaché of the Russian Embassy.

KH: *How did the meeting go?*

SM: I was very impressed with this man. I was accustomed to the long-established tradition in the United States of offering diplomatic positions to political contributors. I had seen photos in the newspapers of the American Ambassador to Cuba during the Batista regime enjoying a superficial life with the dictator in parties and nightclubs. Russian diplomats were obviously very well trained. The attaché spoke beautiful Spanish and was knowledgeable about Cuban literature and music.

KH: *What did you decide to do then?*

SM: I came back to New York to try to help my father get started in America. How could I do it? My life at Juilliard was becoming a nightmare! At that time, there was no system of academic credits. I was able to take any courses I wanted; I filled in every minute from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., taking, in addition to the all the required degree courses, violin, clarinet, trumpet, organ, Gregorian chant, choral and orchestral conducting, and just about everything I could fit into my schedule.

KH: *That sounds wonderful!*

SM: Wait! I had to fly to Miami every month, in order to bring back with me pieces of jewelry handmade by Cuban artisans relocated in Miami and bought by my father at wholesale prices. My father had resumed his business, the *Payret* jewelry store, a single counter in a large space shared by many jewelers. New York was the best place to sell these precious items which were highly appreciated by jewelers on 47th Street in Manhattan.

KH: *So you became your father's New York salesman!*

SM: Exactly. At that time, I spent my afternoons away from Juilliard, selling jewelry from dealer to dealer on West 47th Street. One has to understand the difficulty of trying to sell jewelry to store owners who might suspect that the seller is offering stolen goods. There is no question that carrying my father's business card, speaking in Yiddish and alluding to recent events in Cuba, made it easier for me to win their trust, even though I was not even wearing a *yarmulke*! After they got to know me, I had no problem selling everything at the prices expected. The jewelry was all handmade and included precious

stones and gold coins of the highest quality.

KH: *Did you ever practice?*

SM: By that time, I was already experiencing problems with my right hand. That is a delicate subject which we can touch upon later. Meanwhile, I tried to practice for about two hours, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Afterwards, I would take a train to specific communities in New Jersey where large numbers of Cubans had established themselves, where I found an additional marketplace for my jewelry. There it was not Yiddish but Spanish that made it possible for me to win their trust.

KH: *How strange. You had chosen music in order to live an artistic life instead of staying in Havana to help your father with his business. At the time of your decision, I imagine that no one suspected that your father would have to eventually give up on his jewelry store there. At Juilliard, instead of only focusing on your music, you actually became indirectly involved in your father's business by helping him reestablish himself in Miami.*

SM: It was very difficult. I had no time to study and little time to practice.

KH: *How did this affect your attitude towards your studies at Juilliard?*

SM: From the moment I arrived in New York until now, I have always taken advantage of the cultural incentives that this great city has to offer. When I see my MSM students trying to become artists through the narrow avenue of routine practice, I am disappointed. They fail to enrich their understanding of music and the arts in general, which they could achieve by attending performances of music that involve other instruments besides their own.

So often, when a pianist performs a concerto before intermission, all the piano students sitting in the balcony leave during intermission before a symphonic work is about to be performed.

Curiosity has been the key word that has guided me in my life. I take it as far as testing each of my students by way of my studio window that faces 122nd Street.

KH: *How do you test them?*

SM: If I ask a student to look out of the window and tell me what he or she sees, a usual response describes the weather, refers to people walking or waiting for a bus, the cars double parked, etc. On one occasion, a student noticed the elements of Gothic architecture that can be found in both the Riverside Church and the Union Theological Seminary buildings. It reminded him of pictures of buildings in Germany from the Middle Ages.

In no time he established the relationship between the two buildings near MSM, a Protestant church and a Protestant school, with Martin Luther and the beginning of the Protestant movement in Germany at that time. That was a 16-year-old! It clearly shows what a difference it makes when we look at the world with the curiosity to explore it. Being curious and having a desire to learn is a great asset that allows us to fully enjoy the beautiful things in life.

KH: For some of us who come from foreign countries, it is difficult to adjust and take full advantage of the opportunity that comes our way. Often the language can be a barrier. I know how much you wish that all your students read The New York Times every day. That is only one example.

SM: New York is an international city. I remember my attitude when I first came from Cuba, a small island in the Caribbean. Suddenly I was in the midst of opera, Carnegie Hall, museums, lectures, plays, Broadway shows and classical and modern ballet. What my eyes had seen and what my ears had heard is indescribable. How could I not feel that I profited immensely from all of that experience? How could I be a teacher if I didn't have that broad a background? I need to have knowledge of repertoire, names and styles of artists, not only in piano but also in other instruments—in other words, both musical and general culture.. How could I gain the respect of students if I only knew a little bit more than what they know?

I would like my students to follow the same path and realize that, once they settle in their own countries, they would have gained enormously from their cultural experience in New York, to the point of making a big difference in the contribution they could make back home.

KH: I imagine that not all your students share your enthusiasm for cultural enrichment.

SM: It is unfortunate that I only see curiosity for discovery and self-realization in a minority of students. Those I enjoy the most, regardless of talent, because I can talk with them. That assessment plays a great part in the selection of students I accept at MSM. I believe I am the only teacher who insists in reading the applicants' essays for entrance as well as their description of their goals.

When I ask a student, "Why do you wish to study with me?", the worst answer I can get is that they wish to win competitions with my help. I promptly point to the walls of my studio so that they can look at the faces of the many prize-winners who came to learn how to play beautifully as their first incentive. Success in competitions can only come as a result of that.

Many of them think that, in order to profit from their experience, they have only to be a good student, practice hard and do what the teacher says. That is nonsense! There is no teacher who can teach even a fraction of everything that a musician has to know. I can't

do it! No one can do it! The student has to complement on his own what he learns from the teacher.

Many students can remember the name of a pianist, but do not have the initiative to read the bio nor the program notes. Why does this pianist play in a certain way? Why does András Schiff play differently from Radu Lupu or Murray Perahia? Where do they come from? Who were their parents? Their teachers? Where and how were they raised? What were the influences in their lives?

You need to know all of that and much more to understand styles and traditions.

KH: During your studies at Juilliard, did you feel that your curiosity was being stimulated?

SM: I was disappointed with the academic courses there. Teachers in the Humanities seemed to have been encouraged to be lenient with the students so that they could concentrate on practicing for competitions. I was also disappointed to be surrounded by classmates whose mentality was geared to learn as little as possible in order to have time to develop their techniques. Teachers had difficulty making progress in class because of that. I hear that it is even more prevalent today.

KH: Knowing you, I am sure this must have been a dilemma that required a solution. What did you decide to do?

SM: I decided to take most of my academic courses during the summers at City College. It was part of the City University of New York and it was considered one of the best schools in the United States, from which some of America's most important scholars had graduated. To be hired to teach at City College you needed to be a world-renowned expert in your field. The school paid the highest salaries.

I will never forget the courses I took there and how much they inspired me to want to learn as much as I could: French symbolist poetry (which was so helpful in the understanding of music by Fauré, Debussy and Ravel), philosophy, psychology, world literature, American literature and 20th-Century European history. This last course was taught by a German Jew who had escaped from the Holocaust by way of Italy. After covering all the historical facts and important events, his question in the final exam challenged us to demonstrate, based on those historical facts, why Germany could or would not attempt again to find its "place in the sun"—something that Spain, the United Kingdom and even Portugal had accomplished at one time or another.

KH: It is interesting that you remember so vividly the final exam question you were confronted with so many years before!

SM: It was a magnificent example of learning facts and then "digesting" them. This has become one of the important tenets of my philosophy on teaching. It is not always

necessary to give the answers to students, but to ask questions that guide them in finding them.

KH: *The Socratic approach?*

SM: Absolutely!

KH: *It seems that we are now past the Cuban revolution. What was your legal status in the United States at that time?*

SM: Following the Cuban revolution, the U.S. gave priority and the opportunity to become citizens to Cubans who were already in the country. For me, having a U.S. passport would allow me to travel unhindered. I had come to the United States years before the revolution, not because of it. So I became a U.S. citizen while maintaining my Cuban citizenship. I have a very good relationship with Cuban cultural organizations and can easily travel to and from Cuba with either passport.

KH: *Can you tell us something about the beginning of your teaching career in the United States?*

SM: During my studies at Juilliard, I had the opportunity to do a great deal of private teaching. One of my senior classmates, Daniel Pollack, was offered a position as a member of the piano faculty at the State University of California in Los Angeles. Up to that time he had a group of about thirty private students in the Armonk area in Westchester, New York.

He asked me to take over his class, a great opportunity to develop my skills and to support my expensive living habits. I enjoy eating in good restaurants and inviting good friends and students, staying in good hotels, and attending performances of opera, concerts and plays. At one time, when I was in better physical shape, I enjoyed shopping and buying good clothing. Now, unfortunately, I have to settle for whatever fits me! I bought myself a small Volkswagen and drove to the area a few afternoons a week, teaching 30-minute lessons from house to house, students of all ages, levels and degrees of talent. I am sure that the seeds of my teaching ability took root then.

It is easy for a great performing artist to suddenly decide to teach, and tell an advanced student marvelous things about making a performance of a Beethoven sonata more beautiful and interesting. However, only those who have had to teach from scratch develop the ability to understand and resolve basic problems. Having to teach 30-minute lessons also taught me how to be practical and to the point, an important skill in our current system of teaching college students advanced repertoire in only one hour per week.

KH: How were you able to suddenly deal with so many new students of so many different backgrounds?

SM: To start with, I trusted my intuition. I placed myself in the position of each student and tried to find the best way to proceed from one step to the next. In addition, I undertook an intensive exploration of piano pedagogy through workshops and lectures. Frances Clark at Princeton, Robert Pace (later on) at Teachers College and other outstanding pedagogues exerted a great influence on me.

I would spend hours reviewing the many methods and books available at that time and experimented with many, by assigning them to students with a diversity of needs. I subscribed to numerous professional magazines and I read every article I could put my hands on.

KH: How did you make the move from private teaching to a teaching position in a school?

SM: After I started studying with Mr. Gorodnitzki, I became acquainted with his main assistant, Herbert Stessin, who later became a lifelong friend. Gorodnitzki asked me to help him teach a talented new student from Taiwan who, to this day, remembers how helpful I was in explaining and demonstrating Gorodnitzki's basic approach to technique and sound production. I felt honored by the fact that I was the only student at that time from whom Gorodnitzki asked such help.

Mr. Stessin also came to realize that I had some talent for teaching. He was then a faculty member at the Henry Street Settlement, a wonderful neighborhood school on the Lower East Side which, at that time, was still populated by Jewish immigrants who later left the area as their economic status improved.

Since he was still performing, Stessin asked me to substitute for him for a whole day of teaching while he was away on a concert tour. The week prior, I observed his lessons in order to acquaint myself with the needs of each of his students. I remember his lack of patience in dealing with less talented students, and I felt like taking over and resolving problems with a more encouraging approach.

As a result of repeated experiences of this sort, the director of the school, Robert Egan, invited me to join the faculty. My hourly rate was \$4.00!

KH: Did you enjoy your first teaching experiences in a formal setting?

SM: On the first day I had a horrible experience unrelated to my teaching duties. I came out of the subway nearby and, when turning a corner, I was shot at by a policeman who was chasing a thief who had attempted to rob a nearby store. The policeman was running toward the corner, where I was standing in his line of fire.

Otherwise, during the few years I taught there, I enjoyed the intellectual atmosphere that surrounded me as well as the commitment to music by poor Jewish immigrants who were struggling to give their children the best possible education.

I must add that my weekly visits to that neighborhood made me finally appreciate the food that my mother had struggled to feed me with as a sickly child. There was one take-out place where I used to buy a container of *kreplach* or *matzo ball* soup, which I ate with my own spoon brought from home. No plastic spoons at that time! It was absolutely delicious. If that school and neighborhood were still in existence, I would love to teach there again . . . especially for the local cuisine!

KH: *Did you also teach in other schools?*

SM: Yes. I was referred to a wonderful woman, Bella Shumiatcher, who owned a small school in Larchmont, New York. I taught there for a few years and had some excellent students. Ms. Shumiatcher appreciated my teaching and felt at a loss when I was appointed to more important positions elsewhere.

KH: *Were there more?*

SM: Mr. Stessin recommended me to the Bronx-House Music School. The director was Andrew McKinley, who was also in charge of an important summer program in Long Island. I was hired to teach in both places. His wife, Lilly McKinley, chaired the piano department. She immediately noticed my gifts for teaching and always assigned me the best students.

One of them, a little 10-year-old girl, was one of the most talented students I ever had. I don't remember her name, but I wish I could find her somewhere and learn about what happened with her life and her music. She was a born musician.

KH: *What about your appointment to the Juilliard Precollege Division?*

SM: Frances Mann, the director, recognized my gifts during the piano pedagogy courses that I took with her. These classes included the assignment of one young beginner to each student in the class. We had to teach them privately for \$1.00 a lesson and then bring them for a public lesson in front of her and the rest of the class twice during each semester.

Ms. Mann noticed that I had a special talent for teaching, not only because she witnessed my lessons and positively commented about them, but also because she agreed with the way I explained my decisions on materials, repertoire and methodology. She also welcomed my comments on my classmates' lessons. The class discussions were a vehicle for each of us to present our credentials as potential teachers.

At the first opportunity, she appointed me. That was in 1962. I had just received my master's degree the year before. At that time I was the youngest teacher who had ever taught at Juilliard in any division.

KH: *How long did you teach at Juilliard?*

SM: For seven years, until 1969, the year I was invited to teach at the Manhattan School of Music. At that point, Juilliard was moving downtown to the newly created Lincoln Center and a decision was made to abolish the Precollege Division, while MSM moved from its east side address into the building that Juilliard was leaving. Accepting the MSM invitation allowed me to continue the same work I was doing at Juilliard and in the same place where I had been a student for five years and a teacher for seven. Juilliard eventually selected five senior teachers to integrate the piano faculty of a much smaller Precollege Division.

KH: *What had the Juilliard experience been like?*

SM: It gave me the opportunity to work with more advanced and talented students than any I had had in the past. I also had the opportunity to learn a lot of repertoire by assigning music that I had never played before. That was my approach for many years. I also learned a lot from my senior colleagues, including Robert Armstrong, Kathy Parker, Leonard Eisner, Edgar Roberts, and Mr. Stessin himself. Mr. Eisner suffered a heart attack. In those days, heart patients were not allowed out of bed for six to eight weeks, unlike the therapy of today. His students were divided among the rest of us for the duration of his recovery. At the end, many of the students asked to continue with their substitute teachers, and many of the teachers were happy to accept them.

I, for one, refused to take advantage of a great teacher's misfortune and decided not to accept any of his students on a permanent basis no matter how much they and their parents pleaded. Eisner has now passed away, and I have learned only recently that, over the years, he spoke of this whenever my name was mentioned. I never knew that I had made a lifelong friend!

KH: *When did you definitely shift your future career plans from playing to teaching?*

SM: As I was concluding my studies at Juilliard, I noticed an uncomfortable sensation of needles piercing my right thumb. Surprisingly, my doctor did not even look at my right hand, but rather placed his own thumb deeply between the two bones in my right shoulder. I felt the greatest pain ever!

That test convinced him that the nerve that runs from the neck to the thumb was being pinched by a bone in the neck. Unfortunately, I learned from him that that was a permanent condition, whereby the nerve would remain forever sensitive and unable to relax. I later had a *masseur* in Taiwan follow the nerve throughout my arm and

demonstrate to me how sensitive it was from one end to the other.

KH: Could there be a medical solution to this problem?

SM: I was referred to a well-known neurologist. All he could do was to give me some pills for the pain and suggest that I wear a collar to see if the position of my head would affect this nerve being touched. It was very uncomfortable; I couldn't sleep, and I didn't think it was helping me at all, so I stopped wearing it.

I decided to try acupuncture. Since this technique was not very developed in the United States at that time, I traveled to China for treatment. I learned that the leading school of acupuncture and the best training in that field was located in Shanghai. Unfortunately, I was told there that acupuncture might relieve my condition, but not on a permanent basis.

On my return to the United States, I came to realize that the only way to resolve my problem was to have an operation in my neck whereby the surgeon would try to find the one nerve among thousands that is causing the problem. I was also warned that such an operation was extremely dangerous, as it could leave me paralyzed for life.

That is when I decided that my aspirations to become a performer had to come to an end. It was painful and depressing as all my teachers and those who had heard me play felt that I had the potential to achieve it. However, there was compensation in the fact that piano teaching was already a very important part of my life and could fill it with a meaningful purpose.

KH: Does that mean that you never performed in public again?

SM: I actually did. In 1989 I accepted an invitation to perform chamber music in Korea and Taiwan with two MSM colleagues, violinist Albert Markov and cellist Marion Feldman. It was a very risky decision on my part. I had not practiced for nearly thirty years, I had only two months to learn three new trios by Haydn, Brahms and Shostakovich, and I had as many as forty students working with me at that time, and three associate teachers.

KH: How did you manage to practice?

SM: After teaching for three decades, I just put into practice all the principles that I had embraced with my students. I could only spend thirty minutes here and thirty minutes there, and I tried to make the most out of those minutes. One would suppose that I opened the scores on day one and started reading and playing. Not so! I spent a whole week deciding on the best fingering for every passage.

By the time I started playing the notes and actually practicing, I felt very comfortable in my awareness of having found intelligent and problem-solving fingering that I could use

consistently. My fingers and I learned these trios together!

KH: *But what about your technique which you must have lost after all those years?*

SM: I had to face an unexpected problem. I developed extreme pain in the tips of my fingers. It is hard for you and pianists in general to imagine the pain that the constant touch of the keys with soft fingers would cause when one had not maintained the required firmness in the skin that results from years of practicing.

KH: *One would think you would cancel! Could pain relievers help you in any way?*

SM: I went to see a hand doctor. Under the circumstances, I had no choice but to have frequent injections of cortisone in the tips of my fingers. As a matter of fact, it was for that reason that I could not satisfy the requests by Youngho Kim, my former doctoral student and well-known pianist and teacher in Korea, who was in charge of programming, to cut the program into half in order to perform the Haydn and Shostakovich in one concert and the Brahms trio in another. Only my doctor could inject me, so I had to play everything at once soon after arrival, before the effect of the injections would subside. I never told Youngho the reason.

KH: *I have listened to the recording of those trios, which is available in the International Piano Festivals website. It is hard to imagine that you were going through such an ordeal.*

SM: The recording quality is terrible. The amateurish cameraman concentrated on the cello when the piano had the most important part, or on the piano when the violinist was playing the thematic material. Nevertheless, it was a unique emotional experience for me to make music with my own hands.

KH: *You must have felt great!*

SM: Yes, but for a short time. This experience reminded me of the pleasure of playing I had to give up. I really miss it but I had to come to the realization that the long term solution could not depend on cortisone injections!

KH: *What about practicing a little bit once in a while?*

SM: I am a perfectionist. You know what I expect from my students. I expect even more from myself. If I cannot do it right, I don't want to do it at all!

KH: *I know that you were designated as a Steinway artist and your photo of a younger Mikowsky is included in the Steinway Gallery in New York, next to Kissin, Janis, Richard Goode and Horacio Gutiérrez. What a great honor!*

SM: Let there be no confusion: I am there as a teacher! I am honored for having been the first teacher whose photo Steinway decided to include among such famous performers.

KH: *So, you had to abandon your dreams of a performing career?*

SM: Yes, fate led me to become a full-time teacher. Other teaching appointments followed. In 1969, in addition to my position at Manhattan School of Music, I was also invited to teach piano at New York University. I remained in the faculty there for five years until I decided to focus my efforts on my students at MSM. Although the music department at NYU later became an important performance school, the quality of the students I taught there varied enormously.

I used to ask every NYU student at their first lesson to name three compositions that they liked in order to assess their degree of musical sophistication. The range of tastes could go from the Blue Danube Waltz to the *L'histoire du soldat* by Stravinsky.

On one unforgettable occasion, a new student could not recall a single musical composition. After insisting repeatedly, I had no choice but to mention Beethoven to her, hoping that that would ring a bell. It did! She confessed that she had heard the name before, but would never be able to recognize his voice if she heard him sing! She obviously thought that Beethoven was a rock 'n' roll star!

KH: *Did you teach at any other colleges?*

SM: In 1971 I was appointed to the piano faculty at the Philadelphia Musical Academy, now merged into the University of the Arts in that city. There I had the opportunity to not only teach piano majors, but also teach group piano through electronic instruments. During my doctoral studies at Columbia University, I had been exposed to Robert Pace's ideas and materials on this method.

There is no question that offering private lessons to non-pianists (instrumentalists and singers) in college curricula is a very expensive proposition. Group piano became the solution and the Academy was delighted to have me introduce it there. I wanted to have that experience in my background, so I did it, but only for one year.

KH: *Did you then only give lessons to piano majors?*

SM: No, I was also asked to teach piano pedagogy, a subject that attracted me tremendously, as I felt that it was probably the most important course for piano majors. In preparing the outline for the course, I covered a great deal of subject matter that falls into the periphery of traditional piano pedagogy courses. I discussed such subjects as how to find a good piano teacher, how to buy an instrument, how to deal with parents, how to organize a studio, how to test the musical talent of a child, how to handle an audition, etc. Of course, I elaborated on the essential subject matter. In addition, on top of a table in class there were multiple samples of teaching methods and collections for

children for perusal, all of it very useful for the inexperienced student teachers.

KH: *I wish so much that I could have taken that class with you. Did it every cross your mind to teach piano pedagogy at Manhattan School of Music?*

SM: The demand from students applying to my class over the years has made it impossible. What I do regret is not having found the time to get my own students together every year to discuss important issues that bear upon their becoming good teachers. They know they are always welcome to approach me for advice.

I have been repeatedly disappointed when some former students have brought their own students to audition for me. Often the repertoire is badly chosen. It convinces me that the art of great teaching is much more esoteric than performing. If asked to recommend ten pianists for a festival, it would take me two minutes to put the names together. When asked to recommend one good teacher, the task becomes more difficult.

KH: *Have there been any exceptions?*

SM: Absolutely. Many! I hate to mention names as I am afraid that I will unjustly leave out some excellent teachers among my students. However, this is the opportunity to list a few: Aaron Shorr, one of my first students, later became a faculty member at both the Royal Academy and the Royal College of Music in London. Currently he is the Head of Keyboard at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow.

Three other early students of mine, Youngho Kim, Sae-Kyung Park and Jae-Hee Kim, are doing great work in Seoul, Korea, where Youngho is Professor of Piano at Yonsei University. He has been recently joined there by Ian Yungwook Yoo, who also showed an excellent talent for teaching while he was my masters and doctoral student at MSM.

Jovianney Emmanuel Cruz has taught for many years at the University of Manila; Yuan Sheng is professor of piano at the Central Conservatory in Beijing; Chun Wang and Xi You are also teaching there in the Middle School; Bing Han is teaching at the China Conservatory in Beijing; Chi-Ying Hung is teaching in Singapore; Alison Brewster Franzetti teaches at Montclair State University; Gloria Lin is teaching at Texas Christian University; José Ramón Mendez is teaching at New York University; Gustavo Díaz-Jerez teaches at the *Centro Superior de Música Musikene* in the Basque country in Spain; José Luís Castillo is teaching at the *Conservatorio Superior de Música de Canarias*, also in Spain; Charis Dimaras is an Associate Professor at Ithaca College.

Elena Belli, Adam Kent, Robin Freund-Epstein, Daniela Bracchi and Inesa Sinkevych are teaching in the MSM Precollege Division; Kirill Gerstein is Professor of Piano at the *Musikhochschule* in Stuttgart; and Zhiliang Yu directs his own schools in Queens and in Shanghai. Finally, Ren Zhang was offered a position at the Shanghai Conservatory many years ago, following a recital at the school. However, he decided to stay in New York,

playing sporadically (including a recital at the Metropolitan Museum of Art) and making highly praised recordings.

And, of course, you, Kookhee Hong, have demonstrated excellent teaching ability. One of your students, Grace Han, was accepted in my class in the BM program as a result of your superb preparation. She is doing very well. I am glad that your qualifications have been recognized and you have recently been appointed to the faculties of two colleges.

KH: That is an impressive list and I am honored to be included. Can you tell us something about your move from the Precollege to the College Division at Manhattan School of Music?

SM: In 1974, five years after I began teaching at the Precollege Division, Artur Balsam, who was a highly respected musician, pianist and teacher, one of the world's great accompanists and chamber musicians, suddenly required major surgery. The Dean of the College Division at that time, David Simon, asked me to take over Balsam's chamber music classes and to cover his piano students.

I had the greatest respect and admiration for Artur Balsam. We frequently lunched together at the school and it was always a pleasure to listen to his Old World stories of his life in music. He performed with some of the greatest artists. For me, it was a great honor to be asked to replace him and that was, at the same time, a hint of the fact that my work was being noticed by the school's administration.

Although Balsam was a great musician and teacher, some of his students needed an overhauling of their foundation and approach to the instrument. I believe he was beyond doing that kind of work. Most of his students decided they wanted to continue to study with me after Mr. Balsam recuperated. Although I refused to accept any of his students, the Dean decided to appoint me to the College Division anyway, impressed as he was with the work I had done as a substitute.

KH: So far, in your own education, we've only spoken about your going as far as your Masters. We all know you as "Dr." Mikowsky. What prompted you to undertake doctoral degree studies?

SM: It didn't take me very long to feel the need to take my own education to the next level. I was teaching at Manhattan School of Music, at New York University and at the Philadelphia Musical Academy. Aware that the physical problem with my right hand had no solution, I felt I had the time and the energy to keep on learning.

There were basically three doctorates available to me. One was a PhD, which meant for me to spend years studying and researching musical history. I was not inclined to follow that road because I wanted to learn more repertoire and leave enough time to comply with my teaching obligations at three schools.

The other doctoral degrees were Doctor of Education, including a specialty at Columbia University Teachers College, called “Doctor of Education in College Teaching,” which was very attractive to me. The last of the three degrees was the Doctor of Musical Arts, totally new at that time, and only offered by the Catholic University of America and the Eastman School of Music.

KH: Columbia University Teachers College is just across the street from Manhattan School of Music. It makes sense for you to have decided to do your doctoral studies there.

SM: No question about it! It was also the best school in New York to pursue a doctorate.

KH: What was that experience like?

SM: It was very stressful and time-consuming, but I learned a lot. I was able to work with Robert Pace, who had achieved an international reputation in piano pedagogy for children. He was a fine pianist who had been a student of Rosina Lhévinne. I admired the fact that he could perform advanced repertoire and yet was interested in the pianistic and musical development of children. He stressed a combination of group and private teaching, which helped me successfully handle the one year of piano class teaching at the Philadelphia Music Academy.

He also made me aware of the importance of students becoming well rounded musicians and not just piano players. The children who he brought to class to show his approach were being exposed to sight-reading, improvisation, harmonic accompaniment and all the basic components that would help them stay on with their music rather than quit as so many children do. All of this experience prepared me to assist my Manhattan graduates as they faced the beginning of their own teaching careers.

I was lucky again that Pace noticed me. In spite of my hand problem, he asked me to perform most of the repertoire that he presented at all levels, including advanced pieces. I became the “class pianist.” Soon after graduation, he appointed me to the piano faculty. By that time, I was no longer teaching at NYU or at PMA.

KH: If you were already teaching advanced students at MSM, what interest did you have in teaching at TC?

SM: I was seldom able to accept a new student, as the level of performance there is below the minimum required to elicit my interest. My intentions were to work only with graduate students from my class at MSM who might wish to devote themselves to piano pedagogy through the doctoral degree at that institution. I was an Adjunct Associate Professor of Music at Teachers College, Columbia University, for many years.

KH: How did you go about choosing a subject for your doctoral dissertation?

SM: I spent more than two years collecting information and researching the complete piano output of Manuel de Falla. There were various reasons for my choice of subject: first, I love his music; second, most of it can be included in one single LP (at that time, the CD system was unknown). One of my outstanding Spanish students, Gustavo Díaz-Jerez, has recorded all the works of Manuel de Falla for the first time, on a single CD, including some of the early pieces that were never recorded before. Because of my mother tongue being Spanish, I felt privileged to be able to read the immense literature in Spanish available at that time on Spanish music in general and Manuel de Falla specifically. I was already familiar with most of his repertoire, having played it as a student in Cuba and having taught it to my students at Manhattan School of Music. My intentions were to make a real contribution to the English-speaking reader, as I was aware that doctoral dissertations should move the frontiers of knowledge rather than recycle information which has been covered by other authors before.

KH: I know that the subject matter of your dissertation was Cuban music. I am surprised to hear about your original intentions to write about Manuel de Falla.

SM: Unfortunately, I had come too late to the subject! A former classmate of mine from Juilliard was completing her doctoral studies at Boston University. Knowing the subject matter of my intended dissertation, she informed me that a Spanish doctoral student at her university, about sixty years old at that time, who had been a student of Falla and had known him personally for many years, was writing his dissertation on the same subject. She began to send me sample pages of his work as it was being written, which made me realize that my background could not match his in terms of doing justice to the subject. To this day, I still preserve the thousands of pages of materials on Falla copied from all kinds of publications available in a number of libraries. All of that was a financial burden on me, as copying sections of books at libraries at that time cost 25¢ per page!

KH: I guess that meant you had to start all over again!

SM: Following that disappointment, I had to be very careful about my choice of subject. I immediately thought of Cuba. Why not? Sentenat had introduced me early in my musical education to the beautiful *danzas* by Ignacio Cervantes, the leading 19th-Century Cuban composer. I also learned and performed music by other Cuban composers. I was reasonably sure that no one had written a doctoral dissertation on the Cuban XIX Century *Danza* before. I nevertheless researched it very carefully, through the means available at the time. Being the compulsive perfectionist that I am, I decided to collect all the material I could possibly find on this composer and on the subject in general, just as I had done with Manuel de Falla. That undertaking took two years and brought me to the 42nd Street Library, Lincoln Center Library, the Library of Congress, the Library of the Pan American Union and the Spanish Library in Manhattan.

The end result was something of which I am proud! Surprisingly, I later discovered that my doctoral dissertation on 19th-Century Cuban music was partially translated into Spanish and published in Cuba, where I later became aware that it was the most

comprehensive and thorough study on the subject ever written and up to this date. It has been used as a textbook and as a work of reference for Cuban and international researchers. The complete original version in English is available in the MSM Library and is in preparation for the internet at www.solomonmikowsky.com.

Because of the musicological nature of my dissertation, I took advantage of the opportunity to attend courses at Columbia University itself. I also audited a course on the history of dance at Barnard College.

KH: *Why would you take that specific course at Barnard College?*

SM: The Cuban *danza* is the combination of musical and choreographic elements. My dissertation dealt with both subjects as they developed in parallel. I don't think there is a need to explain what I mean. Anyone interested can just take a look at the index of my book in order to understand the duality involved in doing justice to the subject.

KH: *I know that two of your students won prizes in the Cervantes competition in Cuba. Was that related to the composer about whom you wrote your dissertation?*

SM: Absolutely. In 2000, I was asked to adjudicate the first Ignacio Cervantes International Piano Competition in Havana. It was a natural outcome of the fact that I was the author of such a comprehensive study on the subject. As I mentioned before, Yuan Sheng was the First Prize winner and had a sensational success.

I must admit that as an international competitor he had the advantage of having learned the extensive Cuban repertoire required for the competition with a Cuban teacher. As far as the other standard repertoire included in the competition requirements, he proved to be a true artist. Whenever I have been back in Havana, I always meet someone who heard Yuan in that competition and still remembers his playing with enormous admiration.

KH: *Is the Cuban Spanish version still available?*

SM: Books in Cuba are very inexpensive and disappear from the market in a very short time. I was not present when my book was formally presented to the public (a book-signing ceremony) but I am aware that there was a very large audience and the copies available for sale sold out immediately. Hundreds of copies were set aside for music schools and libraries. I had the opportunity of being present at another presentation of a book on Espadero, Cervantes' piano teacher, written by pianist Cecilio Tieves, a Cuban colleague. There I could clearly sense the tremendous intellectual curiosity among young students achieved since the Cuban revolution. That, and universal healthcare, has solidified my support for the revolution's important achievements in those areas.

KH: *Is there any chance the book will be published again?*

SM: This is now in the hands of the director of the *Muséo de la Música*, Havana, who has undertaken the publication of a new edition. One of Cuba's leading musicologists has written a preface to the second edition.

KH: *Getting back to Manhattan School of Music, would you like to touch on any subject in particular?*

SM: It is important that I give appropriate credit to the deserving former students and associate teachers who have contributed greatly to my work.

As soon as the number of applicants to my class increased, I felt it was a wonderful opportunity to get some of my former outstanding students involved in the process. I commend the work done by Aaron Shorr, who I believe assisted me with Simone Dinnerstein when she came to me as a little girl. Today, she has won worldwide recognition for her artistry, and her interpretations of Bach are a model to all of us who treasure the music of this great composer. Aaron also deserves some credit for that! They are actually great friends!

Youngho Kim also assisted me while he was doing his doctoral studies. Others assisted me for much longer periods including Elena Belli, whose performance of the Mozart C Minor Concerto as winner of the MSM Concerto Competition I still proudly remember. Adam Kent was particularly helpful, especially because of the mastery he achieved as an interpreter of Spanish music, which I assigned to every one of my students. Still a child, I introduced him to Alicia de Larrocha, who later came to admire his playing and became his lifelong friend.

And last, I must include you, Kookhee, as you assisted me with a number of BM and MM students who did so well in their jury exams thanks to your help. I felt good about the fact that these young graduates, who had demonstrated an inclination for teaching, were afforded a valuable experience, the opportunity to teach advanced repertoire to a level of student to which they would not have had access on their own.

KH: *When I came to you, there were no students assisting you. You had Associate Teachers. How did that come about?*

SM: Donn-Alexandre Feder had been a senior classmate of mine during my studies at Juilliard. We had a lot of parallel experiences, including appointments to the Precollege and later to the College Division at MSM. Since he had been a student of Rosina Lhévinne and Gorodnitzki, I felt comfortable sharing students with him, knowing that the basic principles of the Russian School would remain intact. We shared students for many years.

Fiorella Canin had an excellent reputation in the Precollege Division. She and her husband, Martin, were friends of mine from the old days at Juilliard. She also shared

with me a similar approach to piano teaching and I enjoyed having such a dear friend as an Associate Teacher.

Another great friend and wonderful teacher was Sheryl Canellakis, also from the same Russian School. She is the wife of Martin Canellakis, an outstanding conductor with whom some of my students had performed as soloists. It was a pleasure working with her!

KH: You must have decided then to teach all of these students by yourself.

SM: Yes. That happened rather recently. I have reduced my class in the College Division to about twenty students and that keeps me busy three days a week plus my Precollege work on Saturdays.

KH: Any chance that you might again work with Associate Teachers?

SM: Starting this year, I have assigned two former students to assist me, Inesa Sinkevych and Alexandre Moutouzkin, to work with one student each for training purposes.

KH: What about your work in the Precollege Division?

SM: Many years ago I had a very large class. I enjoyed it immensely. Some of my most outstanding students started with me there and later became important artists. Unfortunately, the public high school in New York City that accepted them free of tuition is no longer allowed to give international students such a privilege. That curtailed the number of precocious young students coming to New York for advanced study. My desire to work with only outstanding young talents, plus my schedule in the College Division, has prevented me from accepting many more students.

KH: When you began to also teach at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University, it was a very surprising decision. You were so busy in New York that it is hard to imagine you flying to another city to teach. What prompted you to do such a thing?

SM: All I can tell you is that about ten years ago I gave an audition to Inesa Sinkevych, who had applied to study with me at MSM. She was married at that time and her husband, also a pianist, had the same intention.

During that audition, I worked with her on a Prelude and Fugue by Bach. Her response to my teaching and the chemistry between the two of us made me very eager to have her as a student. Unfortunately, the new 19-floor MSM dormitory that had just been built did not include facilities for a married couple. They could not study with me at MSM.

So I decided to call my dear friend, James Gandre, who had been the Director of Admissions at MSM for many years and had recently become the Dean of the Chicago

College of Performing Arts. He was very surprised at my proposal: I wanted both students to receive a full scholarship plus meals and housing for free on my word that they deserved it, so much so, that I was willing to fly to Chicago once every three weeks, on Sundays, to teach them.

KH: That's amazing! It shows what you are capable of doing when you discover the potential in a student. What was his reaction?

SM: The CCPA has come a long way and is slowly becoming a very important performing school. At that time, however, Jim (as I call him) was responsible for raising the standards of the school. He knew he could trust my own standards. My willingness to travel to Chicago was the best proof he could have that accepting these two new students under those expensive conditions would be beneficial to the school.

The fact is that Inesa won First Prizes in a number of international competitions during her studies with me in Chicago. *Muzo* magazine, the British music journal, ranked CCPA as one of the seven top piano performance schools in the United States soon thereafter. I have remained in the faculty since then, but I limit my class to only three students.

KH: Could we now talk about your festivals which played such an important role in your professional life? I feel blessed to have participated on multiple occasions.

SM: Well, I have been very lucky! For almost twenty years, my students have performed hundreds of recitals all over Spain, as well as in Paris, and many of them have had the great opportunity to play as soloists with two wonderful orchestras in the Spanish Canary Islands.

KH: How did that come about?

SM: It was in the early '90s that the Dean of the University of *La Laguna*, the fifth oldest university in Spain, and the Director of the *Conservatorio Superior de Música de Tenerife*, made an appointment to visit me in my studio in New York with a proposal: they wanted to raise the standards of piano performance in the Canary Islands and they wanted me to assume the responsibility for doing so.

KH: Does that mean they wanted you to teach there?

SM: Yes. However, aware as I was that the level of performance would not be attractive, I accepted on two conditions: that my piano courses should be open to international students and that there should be parallel festivals that would give my best students an opportunity to perform and be paid a reasonable fee.

KH: Did you assume all this responsibility by yourself?

SM: I was lucky to count on the cooperation, both pedagogical and artistic, of Jesús Angel Rodríguez, Professor of Piano at the same conservatory where the courses were to take place. He became Co-Director of the courses and festivals, shared with me the teaching load and became one of my best friends in life.

KH: *How did the amazing opportunity to include two symphony orchestras arise?*

SM: The conductor of the *Orquesta Sinfónica de Tenerife*, Victor Pablo, became impressed with the level of performance shown by my students. The end result was a festival that included six piano recitals and six *concerti* with the orchestra performing three concerts with two soloists in each. I had the privilege of bringing our own David Gilbert to accompany my students almost every summer.

KH: *Could you tell us about the specific festivals on the island of Tenerife?*

SM: That's where the most extensive festivals took place, in the capital city of the Canary island that bears the same name. First, the recitals and orchestral performances took place at the university's auditorium. Eventually, the city's new auditorium, designed by the world famous Spanish architect, Santiago Calatrava, to the cost of millions of euros, was completed. It was an amazing experience to listen to my students perform in such a magnificent hall! The recitals took place at a smaller but also beautiful auditorium of the bank CajaCanarias, sponsor and benefactor of the festivals in Tenerife and also on the island of La Palma, a very green and beautiful island where my students often performed in venues situated high above the clouds.

KH: *I also performed in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. It also became a very important festival.*

SM: The cities of Tenerife and Las Palmas have always competed with each other. Each one has a magnificent symphony orchestra. First, I was invited for my students to perform recitals at the CICCA auditorium, the local bank that sponsored the concerts there. The bank purchased a new German Steinway concert grand for this purpose. In a short time, the government official in charge of culture invited me to have my students perform as soloists with the *Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria* in the magnificent Alfredo Krauss auditorium, which honors the great Spanish tenor who was born there.

KH: *How could you handle two such big festivals at the same time?*

SM: It was a nightmare! Both festivals were taking place at the same time. The students and the performers and I were constantly flying from island to island, for the rehearsals and the concerts.

KH: *I also recalled performing on the island of Lanzarote.*

SM: That's one of the most beautiful places on earth! Because of the volcanic nature of this island and the fact that half of it was covered by lava during an eruption that took place in the 15th century, traveling through parts of Lanzarote makes one feel as if one is visiting the moon.

The concerts took place at the unique auditorium that resulted from an enormous hole left by the lava as it descended from high altitudes down to the sea. A local artist and designer, César Manrique, used his artistic imagination to work with this and similar places in order to adapt natural wonders into beautiful but usable spaces, completely unique and not to be compared to anything else on the planet. The festivals at the auditorium included solo recitals and chamber music. Unfortunately, a few years later, one of the stones from the roof of the hall fell down, prompting the local government to suspend all activities in this unique place, for the safety of the audience.

KH: *What about the festivals in mainland Spain?*

SM: Many opportunities came my way in various cities. Local cultural organizations heard about the success of the festivals in the Canary Islands and wanted to take advantage of our presence in Spain. For five years, we had a festival of six recitals at the magnificent new auditorium in the city of Valladolid, where my students were presented in conjunction with appearances by some of the most famous artists in the world.

Another festival took place in Huesca near the Pyrenees mountains, an area of Spain full of historical ruins that attracts a great number of tourists. Amazingly, most of the audience members in the concerts there were French and Belgian. The concerts took place in an open but covered space next to a very old church built high on a mountain. The view of the landscape for the audience listening to the performer was breathtaking!

KH: *How did you move from one place to another?*

SM: By airplane from the Canary Islands to mainland Spain, as well as between the islands, as the local airline company supported our festivals and offered the tickets *gratis*. In mainland Spain, I rented minivans and I drove with my students from one place to the other. You can imagine the van, built for nine passengers, carrying up to twelve plus all the baggage!

KH: *I know that these opportunities for your students to perform extended to Paris. How did that come about?*

SM: As I remember, I was invited first to teach a course at the *Schola Cantorum* and, later, at the Yamaha Center. We all stayed at the *Casa de España* at the *Cité Universitaire de Paris*. Since that is the center where more than 30,000 students reside, my students' concerts there attracted a very intellectual and involved audience.

KH: Did the organizations that sponsor the concerts have anything to do with the selection of the performers? Were there any managers involved?

SM: I was privileged to recommend whichever students I chose. That was very unusual. In order for an artist to perform in any concert venue, a manager is required to recommend the pianist, to present biographical information and reviews, and to submit recordings. In the case of these festivals, all that was needed was my personal recommendation. They trusted me completely, and I could choose whomever I wanted. I am proud of the many students of mine who participated over a period of eighteen years. They really did their best!

I always made assessments as to who would be an attractive performer. Every concert was successful; the festivals kept on growing up to the point of having more than thirty concerts in one summer. It was of great value to me as a teacher to hear my pupils play in actual performance settings, because there is no question that they play differently in concert than in their lessons. Between concerts, I had time to go over their performances and make corrections.

Students were paid enough for each concert to cover their expenses. I even had students that were able to make enough money from the festivals to cover some of their expenses for the school year.

KH: Can we go back to the parallel courses taking place in Tenerife and mainland Spain during the festivals there?

SM: Following the original invitation from the university and the conservatory, an annual summer course was established in Tenerife. A second consecutive course took place in Vila-seca, near Tarragona, an important Roman city on the Mediterranean coast, which still shows its enduring two-thousand-year-old monuments. Cecilio Tieles, a Cuban pianist and friend mentioned before, was the other professor sharing the teaching with me.

There was a third and last course that took place in Paris every year, allowing the participants in the three courses to have three totally different cultural experiences. The colleague with whom I shared the course in Paris was Ramzi Yassa, a distinguished pianist and professor at the *École Normal de Music*, with whom I have had the pleasure of also sharing jury duties in more than one international competition.

KH: I am so familiar with all the places you describe that I only wish we could do it all over again. I know of no teacher ever who was able to offer so many performing and cultural opportunities to so many students over such a long period of time. Even the time was spent outside of our responsibilities, having dinner at the end of the day, for example, were learning experiences. Can you ever stop teaching?

SM: Maybe we should deal with that subject in the second section of your dissertation!

KH: *You have given master classes in many schools. Can you describe the highlights?*

SM: In 1992 I gave consecutive master classes at the Chopin Academy in Warsaw, at the Liszt Academy in Budapest, at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and, finally, at the Moscow Conservatory.

To me it was a revelation to become intimately acquainted with the point of view and attitudes of the faculties in each institution. In many ways, it was surprising. I found the atmosphere at the Chopin Academy very conservative and academic (as the name implies). The attitude towards the score was very strict and, to my mind, it limited the students' imagination. Although the students who played for me seemed eager to enjoy the ideas suggested, not necessarily found in the score, I could sense that this approach was not always welcome by some of the teachers with whom I had private conversations on the subject.

KH: *I know that you love and respect Rubinstein but often react with even more enthusiasm when listening to some of Friedman's interpretations. What is the standing today of those two great pianists in the minds of the Academy professors?*

SM: My master classes there reminded me of my own student, Yuan Sheng, who had earlier participated in the Chopin International Piano Competition. He made it to the second round but not to the third. Interestingly enough, he was the only contestant invited to perform a whole Chopin recital in Zelazowa Wola, Chopin's birthplace. The reason? His Chopin playing reminded the members of the Chopin Society of Friedman's style, who had been previously considered Chopin's foremost interpreter. He was also invited to play in Paris and in Morocco as a result of his success with this group of Polish Chopinists.

KH: *What about your master classes in Budapest?*

SM: There I had the opportunity of engaging in long conversations with Kornél Zempléni, a former student of Dohnányi whose background went back to Liszt through his line of teachers. Again, he was also very conservative and treated Liszt's scores with the same attitude as one would a Beethoven sonata. Interestingly enough, as one enters the Liszt Academy, the names of the outstanding graduates are boldly listed in a plaque near the entrance. Missing from that list is Gyorgy Sandor, the eminent student of Béla Bartók, who was never forgiven for abandoning the school and continuing his professional training in the United States.

Another important name missing is Georges Cziffra. To me, he represents the virtuosity and rhapsodic quality that makes Liszt's music so exciting. This was in his blood. He was the only gypsy among the many Hungarian pianists who have achieved international recognition. Gypsy music inspired, not only Liszt, but also Brahms and many Spanish

composers. However, for the score-oriented professors there, he was an outcast.

KH: How could it be possible in a country where gypsy music has been such a source of inspiration for many composers? It's part of their blood!

SM: From a historical and geographical point of view, Budapest is very near Vienna and was for a long time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

KH: I know your temperament. You could not have possibly felt comfortable in such an environment. What about the students?

SM: I had no problems with the students in any of the four conservatories in which I taught on this trip. They were all very receptive and eager to hear fresh ideas and open their imaginations. I disregarded my peers' point of view and stuck to my principles. I felt more than qualified to present my point of view since my own line of teachers also went all the way back to Liszt.

KH: You finally faced the Russian School in Russia itself. Are there differences between St. Petersburg and Moscow in that respect?

SM: Quite a bit. It was not until I arrived at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow that I felt I was preaching to the converted! What a joy! I was giving a master class under the watchful eyes of Anton Rubinstein, Neuhaus and Goldenweiser, whose portraits were hanging from the walls. I was honored by the fact that some of the most outstanding professors there, such as Malinin, Naumov and Mogilevsky, welcomed me and attended my master class, demonstrating great enthusiasm and support for my ideas. I must point out that, more than just teaching the students, my master classes often involve the teachers as well as the audience. Questions and answers are very much part of the proceedings.

KH: What was the level of the students in Moscow?

SM: I have had wonderful students over the years come to me from the Moscow Conservatory. However, I must admit that the playing on that occasion was somewhat disappointing. Maybe one of the problems was the repertoire chosen. One student of Malinin played the Beethoven *Emperor Concerto* for me, accompanied by his teacher. The strict sense of rhythm, so basic to the proper interpretation of this magnificent work, was not there. Another student performed *Ondine* by Ravel, demonstrating to me that impressionism for this particular student meant mumbling the notes with the pedal covering a total lack of articulation.

KH: You have recently undertaken a new facet in your professional life. I am referring to the gifts of performance halls and pianos to the Manhattan School of Music, the Chicago College of Performing Arts and to the City of Havana, where you were born. This is something which could be expected from a foundation or a wealthy industrialist. Can

you tell us how these extraordinary initiatives were born?

SM: Well, let's begin with Havana. In 2000, I was a juror at the Ignacio Cervantes International Piano Competition, which I mentioned before. As part of the program, there was a piano concert where many children and teenagers participated. I was amazed at the level! It could compare with the best precollege schools in the world! This is not surprising, as some of the most talented Cuban pianists trained after the revolution were given the opportunity to study in the leading schools of Eastern Europe, mainly the Moscow Conservatory. They became the teachers of the current generation of piano students.

After becoming familiar with the hardships that music students in Cuba have to face, such as the scarcity of instruments and scores and the deterioration of those in existence, plus the fact that even though there are wonderful performance venues, none is adequate for small student recitals, I decided to pursue this worthwhile undertaking. I was introduced to a great man, Mr. Eusebio Leal Spengler, the Historian of the City of Havana. Slowly, over a period of many years, he has been responsible for the magnificent restoration of some of the most important colonial buildings in Old Havana. At our first meeting, it was decided that he would try to find a building that would house the proper hall for conversion into a performance space. On a second trip, two years later, he showed me two possible locations but, unfortunately, none of them satisfied my conception. It was on a third trip, in 2010, that he showed me an absolutely magnificent place which had formerly been a wedding hall in an old Spanish Casino. This building, dating from 1909, has since been totally restored and the performance hall can easily compare with the most beautiful concert halls in Europe.

The next responsibility was the acquisition of a concert grand piano for the hall. Because of the American embargo, the Cuban government was forced to buy its concert grand Steinway pianos in Hamburg, Germany. Cuba's tropical weather makes it difficult to care for these sensitive instruments. The wood used in the construction of American Steinway pianos is more resistant to the harmful effects of the high humidity found throughout the Caribbean.

As a result, I decided to purchase a beautiful Steinway concert grand, restored to its original condition by Klavierhaus in New York. It would take many pages to describe the ordeal I had to go through in sending this piano from New York to Havana. It finally arrived there by boat through Canada and it is, I am sure, the best concert grand instrument in the whole country.

KH: Are there any concerts planned for this new hall and instrument?

SM: I am now involved with an enormous project: the First International Piano Festival in Havana, which will take in June 2013.

KH: *Well, you have had many years of experience directing festivals with your own students in the Canary Islands.*

SM: When I approached the governmental authorities about this project, it was helpful to show them some of the old posters that I kept from those festivals. The structure would be the same: three orchestral concerts by the National Orchestra of Cuba with six prize-winning students from my class performing two *concerti* in each concert, all of it taking place at the *Amadeo Roldán* Auditorium, where the national orchestra performs. Interspersed between, the six soloists would offer a recital each in the new hall. Since the cultural authorities are interested also in the participation of young Cuban pianists in this festival, there would be a national competition to select one of the Cuban recitalists. There would also be a recital by Willany Darias, the first Cuban piano student who has been given official permission to study in the United States. I auditioned her in Havana and she is currently a BM student in my class at MSM.

However, because the main theater where the orchestra performs is being refurbished, the plan as outlined above has been postponed until 2014. There will be a festival in 2013 devoted exclusively to solo piano recitals.

KH: *I know it must be very difficult for Cuba to find the financial resources needed for such an undertaking.*

SM: They can't! Everything requires goodwill. The performers will receive no fee. I will take care of all the traveling expenses as well as the accommodations.

KH: *Is there anything else about this festival that you wish to add?*

SM: First, each performer will be scheduled to give a master class at one of the many music schools in Havana. Their practice sessions will be open for other students to sit and listen to. I will bring a piano technician from New York to go over the four or five Steinway concert grands located in the most important performance venues and Cuban piano technicians will profit from observation and participation in this sort of mini-course on piano maintenance.

The second element, a very attractive one for all involved, is the Varadero beach, probably the most beautiful one in the world, where my students will have an opportunity to enjoy two days of a dream vacation!

KH: *What about the performance space at the Chicago College of Performing Arts?*

SM: There was only one proper concert hall at the school. It is named after Rudolf Ganz, the great pianist and teacher at the Chicago Musical College, the institution that preceded CCPA. My smaller hall is ideal for graduation recitals, auditions and juries. I have gifted a beautiful Steinway "B" for this space. The inauguration took place on November 13, 2011, attended by the president of Roosevelt University (of which CCPA is part),

Provost James Gandre and Dean Henry Fogel. Five of my current and former students at CCPA performed.

KH: Finally, we arrive at the climax: the Solomon Gables Mikowsky Recital Hall at Manhattan School of Music. I was so proud to be part of the opening concert on October 3, 2010. What an unforgettable event!

SM: Yes, it was! I never thought that I could ever undertake such a project. It all started when one of my students rented an apartment in a building on Claremont Avenue, just around the corner from the school. Because he was a foreign student, the landlord at that time was reluctant to rent the apartment to him. Only my signature would make a difference. When this young man decided to get married and move out of the apartment, I found myself to be the legal tenant.

Since MSM had no dormitory at that time, this apartment made it possible for many students of mine to have a place to live over the years. The building later became a co-op, giving me the opportunity to purchase it for a very reasonable price. After the building of the new MSM dormitory, I saw no need to keep this property. Meanwhile, I entertained the idea of having a larger studio at the school than the one I had for many years. The memorabilia collected, such as posters, programs, competition diplomas, etc., required larger wall space than was available in my old studio.

Most important, having heard my students perform in so many concerts, festivals and competitions, I came to realize that I could not prepare them as well as possible on the basis of lessons taking place only in my private studio. There are questions of projection and balances of sound which do not come through fully in a studio. The existing recital halls at Manhattan School of Music are not available, being often reserved for the many recitals and concerts that take place during the year.

So I decided to create a space that would be used often, by myself and my colleagues, to listen to our students when preparing for special performances and competitions. They can perform on a Steinway concert grand Model D instead of the smaller professional Steinway Bs available in our studios, getting invaluable experience in the control of the instrument.

The teacher can sit further away from the student, and both can also invite an audience who will give the student a sense of performing in front of an audience. It would be a great improvement, indeed, over the preparation within the confines of a private studio.

I wanted my gift to create a hall that would make it possible to give more realistic lessons in terms of acoustical environment. I also wanted to offer added facilities for the making of recordings and DVDs, which are constantly needed for auditions and competitions. The school has not been able to provide for the needs of every student in that respect. Students constantly have to rent recording studios outside of the school and this is often

beyond their means.

KH: Was it your idea to create this project in the space left vacant by the old library on the third floor of the original building?

SM: It was former Dean, Richard Adams, who suggested that I contemplate the possibility of considering this particular space as the site for whatever plans I had. The size of that undertaking and the financial resources needed to realize it seemed, at that time, out of the realm of my possibilities. I was warned by those familiar with my investments, savings and overall financial situation that the undertaking of this project could be detrimental to my economic security in the future.

However, upon consulting with my brother-in-law, Isidoro Lerman, who was also my accountant up to his unfortunate passing two years ago, about my intention of donating a hall to the school through my will, he immediately advised me to do it “while my hands are still warm”!

He was so right! How was I able to do it? I was fortunate to be able to donate my apartment to MSM when its price had gone up tenfold. Upon selling it, MSM now had the financial foundation needed for the undertaking. I eventually had to come up with additional funds to complete the renovation and the purchase of three Steinway pianos, a “D” and a “B” for the hall itself, and a second “B” for my new studio across the hall. The school added the funds required to complete the hall.

KH: During your professional life, we have all known you as Solomon Mikowsky. Your naming of the MSM recital hall includes “Gadles” as a middle name. An you tell us where this name comes from?

SM: Spanish-speaking countries include both the father and the mother’s family names. My father’s name was Israel Gadles in his country of origin. My mother’s name was Maria Ruchla Mikowska (the feminine ending). My own name in Cuba, in Spanish of course, was Salomón Gadles Mikowsky. My parents called me *Shloime* (the Yiddish version). They even called me *Shloimele* when I was still a child.

When I came to the United States, I used the English version of my first name, Solomon. I immediately noticed that my father’s family name, Gadles, was constantly mispronounced. After I started my studies with Gorodnitzki, and as a result of his expectations for me to have a performing career, he recommended that I use my mother’s family name as my own family name. At first, I used Solomon Gadles-Mikowsky, then Solomon G. Mikowsky and finally, following Gorodnitzki’s advice, Solomon Mikowsky.

KH: Did you miss excluding your real family name?

SM: Not only do I miss it, but I feel guilty about it! That is exactly why I wanted the hall at MSM to have my real and full name so that Gadles would remain forever affixed on the wall above the entrance.

KH: *In past bios I have seen, they mention you as a contributor to Americas, the Journal of the Organization of American States. Are you a regular contributor?*

SM: I only contributed one article on Cuban music as a request by the organization, after they became acquainted with my book on the subject. I had to write it in a lighter style, different from the dissertation itself which is, unfortunately, heavy and a slow read, full of quotes, references and footnotes.

KH: *With reference to periodicals, you have been interviewed many times, most recently by Piano Artistry in China. Some years ago you were featured in Clavier magazine in an article by Dean Elder, "On Fingerings, Technique, and Making Music Come Alive – An Interview with Solomon Mikowsky," of which I have a copy. He opens with, "Solomon Mikowsky is one of the world's most sought-after teachers, for reasons that are not hard to come by," with which I totally agree! I am aware that Mr. Elder is a very well known music personality who interviewed Rubinstein, among many great artists. How did the interview come about?*

SM: Dean Elder has often been invited as a juror for important international competitions. Over the years, he seemed to have noticed and remembered my students' performances and prizes won. He decided to interview me at his home in Arkansas on my way to Australia.

KH: *I remember seeing a photo of you with Alicia de Larrocha in a French publication.*

SM: I had an excellent and friendly relation with this great Spanish pianist, with whom I shared jury duties in a number of international competitions. She was president of the jury when Alexandre Moutouzkine won the First Prize in the José Iturbi International Piano Competition in Valencia, Spain. I believe that was the last time we saw each other.

KH: *I am sure you had many opportunities to engage in conversation with her about a subject that is so dear and close to you as Spanish music. Can you share with us some of the highlights?*

SM: As I mentioned before, when Adam Kent was my student in the Precollege Division, I arranged for him to have an audition and some lessons with Alicia. It was much later that I could feel comfortable enough to challenge her with regard to the past and current styles of performing Spanish music.

KH: *What do you mean?*

SM: Well, we all know Alicia's interpretations as having been very rhythmic and full of vitality. Now, when I listen to Ricardo Viñes' few recordings of Spanish music, I sense the same attitude towards rhythm that I do when listening to Friedman play Chopin. Since Viñes was a friend of Granados, Albéniz and Falla and interpreted their music to their satisfaction during their lifetime, are we to assume that de Larrocha is too inflexible?

KH: *I know you are a very daring person in conversation, maybe even borderline as to how far one can go! Did you actually dare to imply that she was not interpreting the music correctly?*

SM: Not at all. We remained friends after our conversation! I don't remember the exact words but I challenged her to explain. She did, in very simple terms: at that time, the music was interpreted that way; tastes were different. Today we just don't take such liberties.

KH: *Regardless of the photo with Ms. De Larrocha, the article concentrated mostly on your teaching and your students.*

SM: It contains the most laudatory praise I have ever received in writing: "A magical ability to develop his piano students into artists." I can tell you that there is no teacher in the world who can make such things happen unless the students have the gifts required to become real artists and the discipline that goes along with it.

KH: *You have been honored by the Institute of International Education and by Manhattan School of Music. Can you share some of the background?*

SM: I was awarded the *Cintas* Prize by the IIE. This goes back many years ago and is closely related to my pedagogical contribution. One of the projects I contemplated as a result was the collection of Latin Americans folk songs to serve as the basis for a piano method book. Children all over the world learn to read and play the instrument based on methods written mostly by Russian, Hungarian, French and American authors.

I believe that the same approach can be used by way of music that is familiar to children in the rest of the world. As a Cuban, my interest and concern would apply to Latin America, where my expertise and knowledge would allow me to make a meaningful contribution.

KH: *Tell us about receiving the Presidential Medal from MSM.*

SM: I am very grateful to President Robert Sirota for having honored me in such a magnificent way. I must admit that one of the highlights was the opportunity to be able to speak to such a large audience at commencement exercises. By comparison, I couldn't help but remember the shyness of my youth, to which I referred early on in response to your questions.

Not only was I able to give my speech, but I was even able to make the audience laugh. What a joy! It is really interesting when you try to say something funny and then you have to wait a few seconds to get the audience reaction. The fact that the medal itself was made out of some kind of plastic gave me the opportunity to adopt a “tongue-in-cheek” attitude towards it right on the spot: I compared it to the gold medals, full of diamonds and precious stones, I had sold in my father’s jewelry store in Havana as a teenager and on 47th Street years later.

Who would imagine that I would dismiss the importance of that medal based on the material with which it was made? Nevertheless, I had enough time left in my four-minute speech to reverse course and acknowledge what this medal really represented. I challenged the graduating class to work hard and wish them to succeed, so that they could possibly enjoy some day the great honor I was experiencing at that moment.

KH: What is the greatest pleasure you derive from teaching?

SM: My students’ progress is a continuous joy in my life. It can take place at any level as long as it can be called “progress.” Potential varies from student to student. Reaching the utmost in each case is my goal.

I prefer not to pick and choose and name individual students who have brought great honor to me. I know that, no matter how much I try, I would leave out important names, particularly among those who studied with me at the beginning of my teaching career.

You have suggested that we include my bio and the list of competition winners as an appendix to this dissertation. We must warn the reader that this list can be deceptive. On the one hand, I am sure there are many names and competitions missing. On the other hand, there are students who enjoy successful performing careers without having won any. In any case, the list appears at the end for perusal by anyone interested.

KH: The fact is that your record of winners both within the school and internationally is extraordinary.

SM: I am only proud when my students achieve beauty in their playing within or outside competitions. I am equally proud of those who have established themselves as important teachers and ensemble musicians. I have been disappointed when former Juilliard classmates have decided to change professions, winding up doing something else and abandoning music completely.

I believe that, with few exceptions, that has not been the case with my students. The MSM curriculum has a lot to do with the success rate of keeping students in the music profession. Our graduates get some experience in writing, arranging, conducting, accompanying and are usually capable of teaching theory as well as piano. They are well equipped for survival. Above all, our school does not make non-winning students of

international competitions feel like second class citizens. Whoever can offer some professional contribution to the art we all love has a special status!

KH: Is there anything else you would like to add before we end this review of your fascinating life?

SM: I am sure that, when I read the final paper, I will regret having left out things that I would have liked to include. What I will regret the most is not to mention the many persons whom I have met and learned from throughout my life. The one thing I cannot fail to do is to thank you for having chosen me as a subject of your dissertation. I also appreciate your questions very much as they have helped me to convey my story as smoothly as possible, leading naturally from one subject to the next. Thank you for sharing my life experience with me.

The long conversations we've had have made me realize how much I would have wanted to start all over again and do it better, much better! There is nothing like a life experience to prepare us for "day one" in our lives. It is a vicious circle. We need the experience at the start, but we don't get it until the end.

All I can tell you is that I still have a lot of lot of energy left in me to continue with my work. Most important, my desire to keep living for a long time is based on the realization that I have not had enough time to learn as much as I would like. How wonderful it would be if, many years from now, another intelligent doctoral candidate like you looking for a dissertation subject would be able to come up to me and say: "Dr. Mikowsky, I read Kookhee Hong's doctoral dissertation about you many years ago. Can I get your permission to write an updated version?".

Part II

PEDAGOGY

KH: One would think that this exploration would focus mainly on your ideas and principles regarding the teaching of advanced repertoire at the college level. However, we know that you began your professional life by teaching children while you were a student yourself. I must ask you then, if you would like to begin this conversation with that stage in your life as a teacher.

SM: As I am sure you are well aware, there is a vast literature dealing with the specific subject of introducing children to music by learning to play the piano. I have spent so many years at this endeavor, taken so many courses, attended so many lectures, read so many books and sampled so many methods, that it would be an enormous task to cover it all, worthy of a separate dissertation.

I believe that the important conclusions of this examination of my career as a teacher should derive from the daily challenges I meet with my students in the Manhattan School of Music College Division, as well as the three students I accept at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University. However, as I look at the outline of the subject matter covered in the piano pedagogy classes I taught at the Philadelphia Musical Academy (now University of the Arts) during the early 1970s, I believe that much of it is relevant to young students and their teachers as well as to advanced students.

KH: I am glad you are willing to develop a discussion at both levels. I am sure that many of the future readers of this dissertation will be piano students and graduates who themselves need guidance in facing the same challenges you had as you began your teaching career. Is there a format you would like to follow?

SM: I would like to follow my outline for that course. Some of the subject matter will pertain only to teachers teaching young children. Other subject matter will be of concern only to advanced students. Finally, there will be issues that apply to all levels of achievement. I expect that the length of my answers will reflect the broadness of application.

I find it too limiting to address a specific subject without it being supported by related issues that carry over into other subjects. That is why I like this approach of questions and answers, which gives me the flexibility to cover what is necessary and relevant at a

particular point, and to revisit certain principles as they apply in new contexts.

KH: *For purposes of organization, shall we number the topics as you go along?*

SM: That's a good idea.

KH: *What is your first topic?*

SM: No. 1: Are piano lessons appropriate for all children?

The first issue that I wanted my pedagogy students to face was whether or not piano lessons should be open to all children or only to the talented ones. In my own early experience, I had to teach any child who knocked at my door as that was the only way I could survive financially. Most young teachers will find this to be a practical necessity. Furthermore, if my attitude would have been one of indifference toward those who had no musical inclination, I could never have become a well-rounded and resourceful teacher.

KH: *I can't imagine how you, with your musicality and sensitivity, could have much patience with the results you would get from an untalented child.*

SM: At that stage, when a student made progress, I was pleased. It gave me a sense of success and it assured me that I was doing the right thing for that particular student. One has to keep in mind that music would not exist without the composer, the performer and the audience. Teaching untalented students the beauty of music contributes to their personal development and to their future role as listeners and audience members.

Moreover, I know that I would have no patience today to deal with the challenges I had to face as a beginning teacher. I still remember a girl who learned how to play C and D with the right hand and was surprised when I mentioned that the following week we were going to skip D and go all the way from C to E. She was actually shocked! To her, it seemed like scaling Mt. Everest!

The challenge posed by such students forces the teacher to use his or her utmost imagination to obtain results. If a teacher can make anyone devoid of talent play something beautifully, he or she really deserves the title of "teacher."

KH: *Can the goals be the same in teaching talented versus untalented students?*

SM: Every student is a challenge for any teacher. The goals must be relevant to each student's potential, taking each as an individual.

KH: *Do you believe there are any goals in our approach to students that should be shared by everyone, regardless of their talent?*

SM: Absolutely! One very important goal is the development of musical taste. If at the end of the learning period a student can appreciate the beauty of Mozart and contrast it with a lot of the music that is heard by young people today as part of their popular culture, that would be an important accomplishment. Great music can only exist if it is composed, performed and listened to by a sophisticated audience who can appreciate it, often the result of early exposure through an inspiring teacher who took the student beyond the mere physical task of learning to play a few pieces.

KH: *What other goals would apply to all students?*

SM: No. 2: Independence.

Students need to develop sufficient pianistic skill to explore unfamiliar repertoire on their own, at whatever level of achievement, without the need of a teacher. Learning to read music easily and accurately is the only way that this aim can be accomplished. Children are able to learn to read words and sentences very quickly but sometimes spend years trying to learn to read music properly.

KH: *Music-reading difficulty is such an important and frustrating element in our role as teachers. It is common among both children and college students. Why?*

SM: It is indeed the main reason why children drop out of music early on. This is a very important subject, to which I will probably return in a few contexts.

KH: *Meanwhile, faced with this enormous challenge, can we as teachers play a role in the student's long-term musical development?*

SM: The teacher has an important role to play in encouraging the students to listen to good music, to attend concerts and to read books about music and about the lives of the great composers as part of their comprehensive academic development. Students must be guided in order to stimulate them. This is true of all students, regardless of their reading level. Once there is a foundation, long-term development can continue in a natural way.

KH: *I would hope there is printed information with guidelines to help teachers develop students' appreciation of good music.*

SM: I am not up to date but I imagine that there is a lot of material out there that can be beneficial. It is particularly useful that the newest music appreciation textbooks include CDs with musical examples to follow along with the text. When I was a student myself I searched separately for whatever recordings were helpful, which were then of in LP format.

I recently had a very touching experience. A friend of mine, Sandra Levinson, Director of the Center for Cuban Studies in New York, was asked to inquire among her contacts if

anyone still had in his or her possession the old RCA Victor set, *The History of Music in Sound*, published in conjunction with the Oxford University Press *History of Music*.

I was pleased to advise her that I still had a set that I had owned from the days of the private lessons I taught in the early 1960s. Such a set was now needed for a middle music school in Havana whose recordings were worn out from endless studies. You cannot imagine the joy and happiness that the director of that school expressed to Sandra and myself for bringing such a helpful gift to them and to the students in the school.

KH: *I do remember seeing LP collections of individual composers in your library.*

SM: Yes, and I have just sent them to various music schools in Havana (by way of Canada).

KH: *Let's continue with the goals you have begun to delineate. What was the general form of your presentations?*

SM: Regardless of the subject, I always encouraged class discussion as well as answers to the questions I continually posed. More than that, I tried to abstain as much as possible from delivering information that the students themselves could arrive at on their own, with a little bit of prompting. After all, most of the students already had students of their own and enough teaching experience to contribute welcome inputs to the discussion, of benefit to everyone.

KH: *In as comprehensive a course as you describe, were there any topics that you would think are unique to your own approach to pedagogy?*

SM: I would like to highlight the opportunity for self-expression that learning to play the piano encourages. Sitting in front of a piano and either performing, improvising or playing by ear is an activity that particularly stimulates creativity and imagination. The teacher's approach can either encourage or discourage self-expression, depending on his or her awareness of its importance. I would also like to mention that my emphasis on practice discipline can make students change their attitudes toward all kinds of tasks in their daily lives, helping them become more focused and efficient.

KH: *It is obvious that music can play a very special role in our continual growth as human beings.*

SM: Yes, music can bring aesthetic enjoyment and enrichment as well as personal fulfillment. The skills acquired in its study have broad application in other aspects of our lives. And for students who choose to study another instrument or the voice later, a background of piano study will give them a great advantage.

KH: *What about music as a vehicle for social interaction?*

SM: I felt its positive impact in my own life experience as a youngster. I was so shy that I had difficulty making friends, yet all I had to do was to sit down at the piano at any party and be immediately surrounded by both young and old, requesting this or that popular song. I am grateful that I was given this talent.

KH: There is a strong physical component in playing and mastering an instrument. You must have dealt with it in your piano pedagogy classes.

SM: Certainly, but with one reservation: since the students registered in my piano pedagogy class were not my own piano major students, I was, with a few exceptions, in no position to deal directly with their own physical problems. However, it was my responsibility to make sure that whatever physical problems they might have were not handed down to their own students.

Since all the students brought their own pupils to class to be taught publicly, it was easy to review the good and bad habits that permeated their playing. Young beginners, adult beginners, intermediate players, each student had a unique physical makeup. The proper seating, the height of the bench, the projection of body-weight toward the instrument, the role of the fingers, the wrists, the arms, the shoulders, the back: all of that had to be dealt with gradually as the need arose, without overwhelming the student with too much information at once, which might inhibit his or her sense of freedom and relaxation while learning to control the piano.

KH: Very often, inexperienced beginning teachers have a hard time assessing the musical talents and skills of a prospective student.

SM: It does take a talent for teaching to develop a good sense of those factors, in order to plan the best approach and to assign the proper repertoire. A sustained inability to acquire that sense should prompt consideration of a change of profession. In a way, we are all medical doctors trying to “cure” our students. The right “prescription” is of paramount importance. Mistakes in this regard aren’t necessarily “fatal” to students, but the damage is pervasive and can be long-lasting.

KH: The literature and materials used in piano pedagogy for children is so vast! How did you guide the pedagogy students in gaining the familiarity they needed?

SM: At that time, with no internet or computers, I made the actual publications accessible on a large table, in order to present them in class according to subject matter: beginning piano course books for all age levels; curriculum for technique, theory, sight-reading, solfège and ear-training, rhythm, pedaling, etc.; and of course repertoire itself (mostly anthologies of composers of all periods). All these materials were displayed and reviewed individually, their pros and cons as well as their applicability for specific purposes discussed by the class. I encouraged the students to try out various publications for different students and not to decide too early as to what “method” was

best. Students often shared their experiences using this or that book in their teaching. This generated lively exchanges which seemed to increase their enthusiasm for teaching.

To this day, I keep a large cabinet in my MSM studio full of pedagogical materials. As needed, I review them with any student seeking advice in selecting appropriate materials for his or her pupils.

KH: To summarize so far: we've covered (1) the benefit to the beginning teacher to take on students of all aptitudes; and (2) the importance of a student's development of musical independence. What is the next topic in your syllabus?

SM: No. 3: The first piano lesson.

It is essential that the first lesson should establish the young teacher as knowledgeable and professional. A framework should be planned beforehand to which the teacher will refer. There should be a cordial exchange between teacher and student in order to establish some rapport with the student, and if that student is a child, with his or her parent(s) as well.

Another important element is making an assessment of any level already achieved by the student and his or her needs for the immediate future. There is literature that can guide a young teacher in testing a new student for evaluation. The importance of music, the mastery of the instrument, and the seriousness and commitment required for those purposes should be discussed and clearly established. Which brings me to my next topic.

No. 4. Achieving a positive atmosphere during the lesson.

Multiple factors are involved:

28. Psychological factors: A teacher can feel overwhelmed by the number of things that need to be taught, and therefore should establish a logical sequence. Achieving each new step must give the student a sense of accomplishment and progress, and of having pleased the teacher. Encouragement of the student is crucial to successful teaching.

(b) Rapport with the student: A teacher should make the student feel comfortable about confiding whatever problems might interfere with progress. The eventual goal is the sharing of an artistic experience, which should bring the student and teacher to a kind of close relationship that the student will not experience with anyone else.

I Confidence: The student must feel confident about the teacher's ability to guide his or her growth and artistic development. Each lesson must be a positive step that is clearly part of an overall plan. If the teacher correctly evaluates the parameters of the student's potential and makes demands that are always within those parameters, the end result will be the self-confidence that each student also needs in order to succeed.

No. 5. Establishing a sound studio policy—economic aspects.

There is plenty of published literature on this subject that can be helpful to beginning teachers as well as established ones. When I advise my own students as to their teaching, I take into consideration their individual circumstances.

The big step in their professional development takes place when they finally have a studio of their own which students attend for lessons instead of lessons at home. Having a good instrument, a well-stocked library, supplementary sound equipment and reference materials not only contribute to a professional atmosphere and a more fruitful learning environment, but support a more substantial lesson fee.

No. 6. Parental involvement and responsibility.

It is indeed a challenge for any teacher to deal with both the child and the parents. It is up to the teacher to show the parents how they can contribute to the child's progress and in which situations their anxious concern can become detrimental. A decision as to whether parents should observe the lessons would depend on the age of the student and the teacher's assessment of the pros and cons. The eventual goal in any learning experience should be student independence and individual responsibility.

No. 7. Expanding the students' musical horizons.

It is very important for students to expand their knowledge of repertoire beyond the confines of the pieces they are playing. Listening to a Mozart symphony or serenade can be illuminating when learning a piano sonata and even before a student is ready for such a task. There is a need for guidance as to which concerts to attend, which repertoire to listen to and which books or articles to read. It all should be part of a plan. This plan should be flexible and take into account new developments, but the teacher's guidance as to its order will afford the pupil the maximum benefit.

Parental involvement and support can be helpful to the success of this endeavor. Just as in New York there are wonderful activities and concerts designed for children's musical growth—such as, for instance, the Jewish-sponsored 92nd Street Y—parents should be encouraged to seek similar opportunities in whatever metropolitan areas are close to home.

No. 8. Teaching piano to the child of today—goals, attitudes, conflicts of interest.

It is natural to expect that a child of average or lesser talent will show, at best, a limited commitment to piano studies in the midst of all the attractions that might entice his or her interest in today's post-digital world. However, it is disconcerting that many talented students today lack the discipline required for eventual success in our profession. The endeavors of teaching and studying music, as well as the potential careers of many gifted

and deserving young American musicians, are continually undermined by a surrounding culture that seeks and requires immediate gratification in antithesis to the deferred, but more profound and transformative gratifications of mastering an art. It is therefore a formidable challenge for the teacher to create, in the studio, an environment insulated from this pervasive environment, in which a talented student may be steadily guided to musical proficiency and eventually reap the rewards of his or her long-applied discipline.

No. 9. Positive and negative aspects of teacher demonstrations.

Beginning students require constant demonstration. Their physical approach to the instrument will much depend on what they see and hear at that stage. Yet this should not be overdone. Performing for a more advanced student should never take place before the student has read through a piece to the point of basic familiarity. 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.

At the right time, however, the teacher's demonstration at the keyboard can, of course, be both illuminating and inspiring. Demonstration can also establish a performance standard to be achieved by the student. But the teacher must be alert to student imitation and should instead encourage familiarity with a range of interpretations. Many young teachers fall into the trap of using demonstration as a substitute for real teaching, which requires thematic analysis, goal-delineation and problem-solving.

No. 10. Introduction to music reading.

I have always been frustrated with the fact that a child can read a printed text quite smoothly but will stumble when attempting to read at sight the simplest music. With children I often will open a page to a short biography of a composer and ask them to read the first line aloud. Invariably they will read quite fluently: "Chopin was born in 1810 in Warsaw, Poland." Then we turn to a page of music written by Chopin and once again I ask them to read the first line at the piano. They struggle from the first note on. I wonder why! Although as children we quickly graduate from reading individual letters and words to phrases and sentences, most young piano students learn only to read individual notes and fail to develop the ability to grasp at sight lines and phrases for much too long a time in their musical development. This is because of the premature and misguided emphasis on performance, while disregarding the most basic skill needed for real progress: competent reading skills. Too often the goal is for the pupil to impress an audience with a few showy pieces before he or she has the nuts-and-bolts skills necessary to interpret them properly. As a result musical literacy and artistic comprehension lag far behind mechanical playing ability.

The so-called "Middle C" approach (Thompson, Schaum, *et al.*), has, I feel, interfered with the development of useful music-reading habits. If one adds the negative effect of

using numbers both for fingerings (which are sometimes read instead of the actual notes), and to count beats, it is not surprising that many children become frustrated and quit piano studies early on. This approach also keeps them for a long time on pieces based on only white keys.

To address this problem, Robert Pace (with whom I studied at Teachers College), developed a method which required for children to feel comfortable playing the first five notes of every scale in the basic five-finger position. That way, they could easily transpose any piece based on that position to any major or minor key. Unfortunately, the limits imposed by this system on the musicality of the pieces composed for its use made the end result rather monotonous.

In the 1960s, Frances Clark, with her revolutionary *Time to Begin* piano course primer, introduced an intervallic approach which has been further developed since by other authors. I feel that this approach is indeed a simplified version of a good reader's approach to advanced music. We see groups of notes in a row as we see words in a line of text. That is the musical way.

In the good old days, when I was teaching children on my own, I could benefit from reviewing and comparing many different methods and approaches. There is not one that works best for every student. It takes a lot of experience to make intelligent choices at this crucial time when habits are being formed. The same applies to the selection of beginning reading books for a high-schooler or an adult beginner. For this latter group, there will be a gap between listening sophistication and pianistic skill. It requires great imagination on the part of the teacher to find supplementary materials that can fulfill the need for pleasure while minimizing any sense of frustration.

A teacher's familiarity with the vast range of pedagogical literature is almost as important as his or her knowledge of the piano repertoire. The extra time spent in its exploration will benefit both teacher and student.

No. 11: Basic principles of technique.

It is important for the young teacher to be aware of all the following elements and their proper introduction to the beginning student: hand position; finger motion; roles of the arm and wrist; *legato*; *non-legato*; *portamento*; various *staccatos*; weight and its transfer; chords; octaves; balance (and other subjects which might arise out of class discussion).

No. 12: Establishing good practice habits.

I often challenge my students to become their own teachers. We can even imagine each hand being a teacher with five pupils. Since piano lessons usually take place only once or twice a week, it is important that each student be given a clear idea of how to practice during the intervals in-between. Developing the student's problem-solving capability is of crucial importance, in the long run infinitely more effective than simply supplying him

or her with solutions outright. To do the latter would slow the student's capacity to progress between lessons, and ultimately hold back his or her progress in general.

Many teachers believe that the best approach to a new piece is to practice it hands separately at first. That is why I often ask students who have already been playing for years to imagine arriving at a party where the hostess is a singer and the husband has given her a beautiful grand piano. Learning that the student is a pianist, they ask him or her to accompany the singer in front of the guests.

I know very well what most students would want to do: practice the piano part, hands separately before the performance. Unfortunately there is no such opportunity! The reality is that we must learn to read hands together, from scratch. Hands-separate practice can be useful to isolate certain problems and to achieve ultimate perfection, but it cannot be the first approach to a new score. We must deal with the whole before we deal with the parts.

The fact is that most piano music is written for two hands, and a good reader should be able to manage both hands at the same time from the beginning. More than that, a good reader should be able, just by looking at the score, to form at least a general aural conception of the piece in his or her inner ear before playing a single note. I would venture to say that time spent away from the piano, sitting in a chair reviewing a score, is more valuable than practicing it hands separately.

If a student is unable to make sense of a new piece even when played slower, disregarding mistakes, then the piece is too difficult at that point in his or her study. Working exclusively on difficult repertoire is detrimental to the development of good sight-reading. The student who is made to read through fifty pieces in many different styles over the course of a year will make a better reader than the student who works only on three or four major pieces. The brain maps countless patterns that will be recognized, in whole or part, when encountered again in other pieces to be sight-read later on.

Good habit-formation requires repetition. It is up to the teacher to determine the length of the musical segment to be repeated, always progressing from a smaller group of notes to a larger one. I like to equate good practicing with Chinese cooking: cut everything into small pieces! The most important thing to keep in mind is to make demands on the hands and fingers that are always manageable, never overwhelming, so that every element is under control.

Good practice requires the will-power to interrupt the flow and continuity of the music, in order to review a previous section that requires additional work. Concentrating on that specific place, rather than hoping that the problem will correct itself, is the only way to override any bad habits that already have been reinforced. Bad habits are learned by repetition of errors. They can only be erased by repetition of the *correction*, in conjunction with the awareness of the difference between right and wrong.

Unfortunately, students will play a mistake many times over, and when the mistake is discovered, they are apt to think that one or two careful executions will delete a long-established bad habit. What they have done, without realizing it, is to practice their mistakes until the mistakes are perfect! The brain may know the correct way, but the fingers only know the version that they have repeated so often. That is why the old bad habit must be erased until there is no trace left of it.

KH: In my own experience, I made an old mistake in a performance, even though I had played it correctly for years. Does that prove that you cannot completely erase a bad habit?

SM: Perhaps the term “erase” denotes wishful thinking. Whatever we do is stored in the brain. Learning to do things correctly from the very beginning will favor the storage of only—or at least mostly—correct input. Being sloppy leads to the storage of conflicting input. Although the first approach seems to be the correct one, it has its down-side: it does not train the performer to maintain flexibility in making adjustments if they become necessary. As I discuss the assignment of new pieces to children later on in this outline, we’ll touch more on my pedagogical approach to creating good habits while preserving flexibility.

KH: I remember you writing two lines on a piece of blank paper, one with a pencil and one with a pen, and pointing out the difficulty of deleting the second line, and yet stressing that the first line still left an indelible mark on the paper, after many attempts to erase it.

SM: I was only trying to illustrate that mistakes are never totally erasable. A disciplined approach to preparation will make the eradication of bad habits an orderly process while a sloppy approach will lead to an insecurity that can endanger public performance.

KH: You mentioned previously the benefits to be derived from learning many easier pieces in one year. Does that mean the exclusion of challenging repertoire?

SM: Not at all! My young students always work on two parallel levels: the prescribed main repertoire for their level, supplemented by anthologies of various composers, which give me the opportunity to introduce a lot of contemporary music. Children can experience dissonant sounds and learn to enjoy them.

Another positive aspect of this dual approach is that it gives the students the opportunity to learn many short polyphonic pieces without having to spend too much time on each. Even if it contains only two voices, a minuet by Bach will always be more difficult to sight-read than a sonatina by Clementi. In the sonatinas, which so many teachers, parents and students are so proud to present, there is always one hand doing repetitive figures. The students are really reading only one voice with one hand and accompanying with the other. It is very important to challenge children to deal with two or more voices, and to introduce this challenge early in their training.

KH: It is obvious that a child is getting a thorough foundation when both polyphony and dissonance are introduced through short and easy pieces.

SM: Dissonance is very important. When a child is playing music that has sharps, flats and harmonies that are unexpected and novel, he or she becomes much more alert. After years of dealing with these complexities, the ear develops fluency in the language of music—not just diatonic harmony; the fingers learn to grasp all variety of patterns, not just sonatina-patterns and Alberti bass figures. When the student finally reads through Rachmaninoff, Ravel, Prokofieff, or Bartók, he or she will find that the combinations of notes and sounds are not entirely unfamiliar, they were experienced before.

When one recognizes familiar patterns, one learns a piece much more quickly. After a few years of study, instead of playing only twenty pieces, a student might end up playing well over a hundred. At this point the student will already have the tools to enjoy music for a lifetime even if he or she ultimately does not become a performer.

KH: Do you think that there is too much student attention in practicing to technical security, and not enough attention to beauty?

SM: I know that if I heard most of my students practice through a keyhole, I would die of depression! However, in the case of former students like Simone Dinnerstein, Kirill Gerstein, Alexander Moutouzkine, Yuan Sheng, Aaron Shorr, Jovianney Emmanuel Cruz, José Ramón Méndez, Youngho Kim, Gustavo Díaz-Jerez, Michael Namirovsky, Maxim Anikushin, Edward Neeman, Ren Zhang, Elina Chirstova, Adam Kosmieja, Yukiko Akagi, Sofya Melikian, Hayk Arsenyan, Adam Kent, Chi-Ying Hung, Gloria Lin, Xiayin Wang, Zhiliang Yu, Anna Khanina, Jingjing Wang, Rowena Arrieta, Martin Söderberg, Allison Brewster-Franzetti, Kiai Nara, Jae-Hee Kim, , Daniela Bracchi, Robin Freund-Epstein, Elena Belli, Olga Vinokur, Chie Watanabe, Tatiana Tessman, Inesa Sinkevych, Yungwook Yoo and you, all having successful performing and/or teaching careers, I am sure that they repeat a phrase many times in their daily practice, not only in search of technical security and perfection, but also striving for beauty and musical meaning. They all learned to always take an artistic approach to practice.

Unfortunately, most students practice by tedious repetition and for one purpose only: technical security. Nothing will make them dwell on a passage except an evident mistake or a lapse in clarity.

That is why I have invited Simone to MSM, not only to play but to also talk about her values and practice approach. If I were one of her classmates, I would want to talk with her and ask her many questions. Unfortunately, most students seem to have “no time to waste.” They would rather remain immersed in their routines.

KH: One unique feature of your teaching has been making your students aware that when they practice effectively, they are teaching themselves how to analyze as well as solve

their problems. I found that very helpful in my own development. What led you to think along those terms?

SM: Common sense. I very often tell a student who is having a problem to ask him- or herself what advice they would offer their own student facing the same situation. Whether the answer is valuable or not, the question makes the student think as a teacher and eventually understand how better to use his or her practice time. Unfortunately, students lose too many hours in mindless and unproductive practice. Those lucky ones who have students of their own are bound to improve their practice habits by becoming their own teachers.

No. 13: The development of beautiful tone.

There are teachers who spend a lot of time explaining the physical elements required to achieve a beautiful tone without first making the student aware of what a beautiful tone is. We must hear a beautiful tone before we reproduce it on the keyboard.

In that regard, I was fortunate to have studied with teacher, Gorodnitzki, who was patient enough with me to spend many lessons working on tone production. His own teacher, Josef Lhévinne, described it as vividly as anyone can in his book, *Basic Principles in Pianoforte Playing*, though no written explanation can be a substitute for the experience of hearing it. Gorodnitzki taught me to imagine the sound I wanted even before I pressed the key. Until a student can achieve that sense of aural anticipation, work remains to be done. The balance between the arm weight, the wrist and the finger must instantaneously adapt itself to the achievement of the particular sound desired. The tone the ear demands must inform the body.

As tradition has established, I favor the use of the fleshy part of the fingertips for melodic playing. This requires for the fingers not to be as curled as we so often find among students. Curling a bit more can be welcome in rapid passages requiring clarity, the degree of which is always an individual consideration. What is important as far as beginning students is concerned is to arrive at the best possible hand position gradually while covering pedagogical material. It is a mistake to insist on specific mechanics while students yet lack the required control. Eventually, an overall hand position should be flexible and adaptable for the control of the sound desired.

Those students who are slight and whose hands and wrists almost reveal their bone structure might need to compensate by using the fleshy part of the fingers as much as possible. I often challenge such players to make melodies sound as though they were played by a cello. Students with thick fingers often need to do just the opposite: play with the tips and avoid the fleshy part. If I tell them to imitate a harpsichord instead of a cello, that is more helpful.

KH: As important as the production of the most beautiful sound possible is, how does it apply to a melody? Does it only take for every single note in a melody to be beautiful, or

are there other elements to be considered?

SM: To be a singer, the first requirement is a beautiful singing tone. Otherwise, why sing? The same is true of a violinist. The advantage that both have over a pianist with regard to melody is the possibility of connecting all those beautiful sounds into a continuous musical phrase. We pianists, on the other hand, have to strive for the approximation of the same result while striking individual keys with our fingers. That is why I always refer to the concept of the transfer of weight, which can give the illusion of a continuous vocal line although played on individual keys.

The wrist again plays a critical role, similar to the one the bow plays when playing a group of notes in one movement. I also use the term “floating,” which refers to a high wrist with the fingers almost hanging from it. “Floating” applies to melodic playing that does not require a very deep singing tone on every note, and in that case, one arm movement through the wrist can encompass a large group of notes. In most cases, though, one wrist movement can only handle a few notes and needs a new impulse which would transfer its weight to the next group of notes in the melody.

There is a close relationship between a floating sound at the piano and a *mezza voce* effect when singing. The concept of singing at the piano should not necessarily involve always striving for a deep sound. Lightness should be an important resource which can be very appropriate in interpretation. In fact, great singers can be a model for us to emulate as we make interpretive decisions in handling melodies at the piano. Certainly Chopin felt this about the great singers of his day.

KH: *Can you cite an example of “floating” in the vocal repertoire, that can give us a better sense of your meaning?*

SM: I can think of nothing more appropriate than Rosa Ponselle’s recording of *Casta Diva*, from the opera *Norma* by Bellini.

KH: *What about an example of “mezza voce” singing?*

SM: Just listen to any recording of a great lieder singer such as Fischer-Dieskau. It is always impressive to hear a singer with a big voice, able to apply this technique to the point of producing a ravishing pianissimo effect. An ideal example can be found in the recording of *E lucevan le tude* by Miguel Fleta, wherein he reaches the highest note at full volume which *segues* into a diminuendo on that note which seems to last forever and reduces the sound to a whisper. Sometimes a *mezza voce* can be part of the intrinsic vocal quality of a lyric singer such as John McCormack. Listen to his renditions of Irish folksongs.

Listen, also, to Pavarotti approach the high B-flat at the end of *Celeste Aida*. It has a stentorian, dramatic quality. This quality certainly has its applications in the piano repertoire. Now compare that to a high note sung by Elizabeth Schwartzkopf in any song

by Schumann. You will hear a suavity which is very hard for most students to reproduce at the piano.

Unfortunately most students base all their acoustical and tonal decisions on their limited experience listening to their own instruments. That is why it is so important for them to be exposed to great singers and to sing along with them. Many surprises can await them! At the piano, reaching for a high note requires nothing else than the striking of that key. For a singer, it is a different experience: it involves breathing, a sense of reaching, and the final arrival.

KH: You have always been a strong promoter of the interpretive freedom of the so-called Golden Age pianists, among the few students you felt might have an affinity and be capable of developing such a style. Do you feel, in listening to those master pianists, that their approach to melody was more vocal than that of the younger generation?

SM: I do! That is one of the many elements that attract me to their playing. I recently re-listened to a recording by Shura Cherkassky, the last exponent of this style, of the Schubert Impromptu, Op. 90, No. 3, taken from a recital he played in Japan shortly before his death. One of the reasons his performance is so satisfying is because the melodic line is so vocal in character—the high notes remind me of the approach a great Lieder singer would use—and also because the accompanying figure has a transparency that reminds me of Gerald Moore, the great British collaborative pianist. After all, there is no question that this particular impromptu is a “song without words,” by the most original and prolific songwriter in history.

I do have to add that the examples of the past masters are not completely lost on the new generation. My former student, Ren Zhang, winner of the *Shura Cherkassky Award* has been praised by London’s *International Piano* magazine for exemplifying that tradition.

However, both Simone Dinnerstein and Kirill Gerstein have recorded the same Impromptu. I am proud that their interpretation, each in a different way, brings forth the beauty of this work while adhering to a classical approach, letting the music sing simply and devoid of mannerism.

KH: You used the word, “transparency” in describing Cherkassky’s approach to the accompanying right-hand middle voice in the impromptu . Can you elaborate?

SM: In this piece, most pianists have the tendency to press the pedal down all the way for each harmony in order to create a wash of sound. The harmonic pulse of this impromptu is quite slow, so we stay in one chord for a long time. The question is: do we want to hear the static harmony, or do we want to hear the “kinesthetic” eighth-note triplets that make the accompaniment sound effervescent instead? Cherkassky’s approach is light in touch, almost non-legato, which contrasts beautifully with the mellowness of the long melody notes. This is what I call true virtuosity!

I will never forget the Cherkassky recital in Carnegie Hall, when I sat with thirty of my students in the balcony. The stage seemed so far away and Cherkassky such a tiny figure. But when he played *forte*, the sound filled the hall.

What were unusual were his daring *tudes do*, in which I never heard anyone else approach such a degree of intimacy. One would think that such soft playing had no place in as spacious a hall as Carnegie. Not true for Shura Cherkassky! He had that special ear and touch that sent a sound to travel all of that distance and reach each member of the audience as if a secret was being told right into one's ear, for no one else to hear. When I descended the staircase after the concert, I had to support myself on the banister, as the delight and excitement of the evening had made me dizzy!

I have learned so much from Cherkassky that I consider him one of my teachers, even though I never had any formal lessons with him. The first of his concerts that I attended at Hunter College in the early 1970s was a revelation. It made me realize that my instincts toward interpretation of a large segment of the romantic repertoire need not be curtailed, as I had felt with Gorodnitzki, but rather encouraged. Cherkassky became my soul-mate, to whom I have dedicated the concert grand piano I gifted to MSM for my hall. In the plaque, I make reference to his "intoxicating sounds that still caress my ears."

No. 14: Technical development—exercises, scales and tudes vs. technical excerpts from the literature.

Regardless of the fact that the teacher might selected the appropriate repertoire, it would still take a lot of experience for a child to extract challenging passages from the pieces on which to concentrate for technical development. The benefits to be derived would be obvious as there would be an improvement in both technique in general and in the learning of more musically valuable pieces. It would mean that technical mastery and mastery of repertoire were working together, side by side.

That is why, as a rule, most children need a thorough diet of exercises, scales and tudes before they are ready to extract their technical challenges from their music. The musical quality of tudes in general is not as stimulating as the little masterpieces by the great composers, so the transition from boring tudes to real music should be made as soon as possible. Life is short; the more time that is spent on great music, the better.

KH: What was your personal experience with repertoire vs. exercises in your own early development?

SM: Sentenat, my teacher in Cuba, brought back from France the point of view favored by most European conservatories early in the twentieth century. He often cited the need to practice four hours of daily exercises, tudes, and scales before working on the main repertoire. I never did that!

Although I have a substantial library of very interesting technical materials, I seldom assign any of it. My main interest lies in teaching my students how to develop their techniques through intelligent practicing of their repertoire. When supplementary or remedial technical exercises are indicated, I always suggest that they be practiced at the end of the session rather than at the beginning, just the opposite of what my own teacher recommended.

I think it's very important to tackle the musical, stylistic, emotional, and intellectual challenges of music when the mind is rested and fresh. When the point arrives that concentration is flagging, supplementary time can instead be used most wisely by dealing with exclusively physical challenges.

No. 15: Supplementary skills.

Sometimes we teachers feel so compelled to spend all our lesson time perfecting performances of current pieces that we forget that one of our most important responsibilities is to produce well-rounded musicians. It would be ideal for students to attend a music school where supplementary subjects such as theory, harmony, sight-singing (including *sofège*), transposition, score-reading, music history, piano literature, etc., were covered in classes. If the piano teacher must be the one responsible for such varied instruction, materials should be assembled, preferably to be used in separate sessions organized for group instruction, so as not to compromise too much of the limited lesson time required for serious solo work.

A sense of the larger picture can be established in a pleasant way on the day of the student's birthday: how nice it is for a teacher to ask his student in which key he or she would like to hear the teacher play "Happy Birthday." Or, the teacher might suggest, what about hearing it in the style of Bach or Schubert or Bartók? This experience can bring home to the student the pleasures to be derived from making music that is not necessarily printed, or written by a great composer.

I believe that singing is of great value in sensing the beauty of music. The teacher must challenge the student in that regard, breaking down any barriers of shyness or awkwardness that so commonly afflict children today when it comes to singing. Conducting an imaginary orchestra is also useful: the responsibility of conveying the character of a phrase or a section with his or her facial expressions and body language invites the realization that performing at the piano for an audience calls for a similar sense of projection, in a manner that is communicative without being distracting.

No. 16: The pedals.

It is a conundrum that we teachers seldom hear our students practicing on their own pianos. What one can learn on a Steinway grand in a lesson about pedaling is sometimes difficult to apply to a lesser piano, particularly if it is an upright. My approach to pedaling presumes that piano music is first conceived without pedal and that the pedal

later enhances the music when it is added later selectively. I strongly believe that all students, except the most advanced and experienced, should often practice without pedal so that no cover-up takes place. The resonance and reverberation added by the damper pedal can conceal a multitude of sins, and the student should first obtain clear sense of the texture of a passage in order to add later on whatever pedaling effects seem necessary to enhance the performance.

There are cases where a young child is talented and accomplished enough to deal with repertoire that requires the use of pedal, yet he/she is too small to reach the pedals comfortably. In such cases it is sometimes necessary that the child should stand while playing, in order to use the pedals. Under these circumstances the teacher would be well advised to supplement those pieces requiring pedal with plenty of material that does not, so that the child can sit comfortably in the proper position, for which a stool is necessary most of the time.

With the damper pedal it is essential to create good habits of spacing, requiring the pedal to be pressed only after the new harmony has clearly been established in the hands. Children with problems in that regard can profit from the book *First Pedal Studies* by Jessie Gaynor, which clearly delineates the exact pedal timing in rhythmic notation, for various practice examples.

The *una corda* and *sostenuto* should be avoided until the student achieves quite sophisticated control. In any case, they both function differently in an upright from the way they do in a grand.

KH: *Among the pianists you like us to listen to, whose use of the pedal is the most artistic?*

SM: One learns a lot about pedaling from Shura Cherkassky. Listening to him, I would say he was almost daring in his unwillingness to cover up. To me, it was illuminating to hear how he made the textures become so vivid and compelling, often moving the music forward. His use of pedal was usually remarkably spare. When the sound is as rich as his—or Horowitz’ for that matter—it seems to “hang” and remain in the air and in our memory longer. Less pedal is needed then, as the ears seem to help make many of the necessary connections. Those are effects that pianists should strive for; they hypnotize the audience.

KH: *Can you offer a frequent example of improper pedaling?*

SM: In Beethoven’s Sonata, Op. 53 (“Waldstein”), we have a subject based on a repeated staccato figure. While the left hand continues this repetition, the right hand embellishes it with five-finger legato groups. In approaching the right hand alone, it makes sense to depress the damper pedal on the first note and bring it up on the last note, in order to enhance the phrasing and legato inherent in the group. However, this pedal application has an undesirable effect on the left-hand repetition. By using the pedal, we begin to hear

the main subject combining both dry and blurred staccato, in alternation. Since Beethoven never added slurs to the left hand repetition, we can assume that the use of the damper for the right hand distorts his intent. Many students, and unfortunately too many teachers, are often guilty of this distortion. I often stress the importance of paying attention to polyphony. This is a clear, frequent case of it being totally ignored.

No. 17: Scales and arpeggios.

Teachers feel proud when they accomplish the completion of the teaching of all major and minor scales to children, often before scale-work appears in their repertoire. No wonder many children quit playing the piano! I do believe in the importance of becoming familiar with all twenty-four tonalities, but without the added ordeal of dealing with standard scale fingerings until later. This can be accomplished by way of tetrachords, which require four notes to be played by fingers 4-3-2-1 in the left hand, with fingers 1-2-3-4 in the right hand. This approach can be supplemented with basic scale-writing exercises. When children play what they themselves have written out, it becomes an important reinforcement.

I postpone the passing of the thumb until later, when the student has achieved a certain degree of smoothness and speed, allowing the hand to move up and down with no distortion to its position as a result of passing of the thumb. The hand shifts above the thumb, without the need to bring the elbow out to “reach” the contiguous note above or below.

A tradition has been established to place the thumb of the right hand and the fifth finger of the left hand on the first note of any scale beginning with a white key, except for B-major where the left hand begins with the fourth finger on the first note. That approach creates problems in certain instances.

Take, for example, the D major scale in the left hand. The traditional fingering for the first octave is 5-4-3-2-1, 3-2-1. The most cumbersome moment is when we begin the second octave by moving from 1 (D) to 4 (E), which are consecutive white keys. It is much easier to place the fourth finger on F-sharp, a black key. The smoothest left-hand fingering for this scale would then be 2-1, 4-3-2-1, 3-2 etc.

Shifting the hand over the thumb into a new position can contribute to the clarification of the rhythmic pulse whenever they coincide. Avoiding the opposite is preferable but not always possible. Obviously we must strive for total evenness, and this begins by avoiding clumsy fingering decisions which contribute to unintentional accents.

Gorodnitzki had an approach that I have used frequently in my own teaching. I imagine this is something that he learned from Josef Lhévinne and the old Russian school. It involves playing the C-major scale very slowly, hands separately in contrary motion, first for one octave and then for two octaves. The different roles of the thumb, moving

smoothly close to the keys in horizontal motion, vs. the other fingers striking the notes in a vertical motion, were clearly delineated.

This was a step-by-step approach with enough time in-between to analyze each movement, making sure that an appropriate hand position was always maintained, with the hand shifting over the thumb without disturbing the thumb's posture. This idea of shifting the hand at a slow motion duplicates our approach when playing scales at a faster speed. It is unfortunate that often students confront scales in slow motion without proper guidance that would prevent distortions in stability of the hand position. Often the slow-motion activity of the fingers has nothing to do with what the hand must do at full tempo. Clumsiness, extraneous and unwanted motions and accents, unevenness and inconsistent articulation are the results.

Introducing arpeggios too soon can be problematic as well, since the intervals involved in the passing of the thumb are larger. However, the approach is the same as with scales: the shift places the hand in front of the wanted note without distortion of the hand position, whether playing slowly or rapidly.

KH: Is there a particular scale book that you would recommend for beginning students?

SM: There is no scale book that will explain the particular process I just described. There have been a number of books written on piano technique that include the author's suggestions for approaching scales. Out of curiosity, I have added many of those to my library in order to familiarize myself with different points of view. I again come to the conclusion that it is impossible to teach mastery of the piano by way of a book.

Great teaching has been handed down from generation to generation by great teachers and their pupils, many of whom went on to become great teachers themselves. I wonder how many great pianists could articulately describe the principles that guided them in their development. Going further: how big is the difference in the technical approach between great masters? I would venture to say that there is a lot that is similar and very little that is different. Differentiation takes place in terms of interpretation, rather than in technical approach—allowing, of course, for the differences in the physical makeup from pianist to pianist.

There are two things that cannot be learned from a book: how to make love, and how to play the piano!

That being said, however, there is a scale-and-arpeggio book by Henry Levine that I used because it includes tetrachords, in addition to the traditional scales and arpeggios and their fingerings.

No. 18: Theory.

Books that include playing examples from standard repertoire are preferable. For a student already approaching an intermediate level, a book like *The Language of the Piano*, by Priesing & Tecklin (C. Fischer) is a fine example of a theory workbook that allows a student to play and analyze a segment of music literature that illustrates the subject matter being studied. In selecting appropriate theory books for different levels of advancement, it is helpful to keep in mind a rationale that brings theoretical studies and performance into a close relationship.

No. 19: Rhythm.

KH: I know that this is an important subject for you. Many students consider rhythm to be something to be learned with a metronome. For them, rhythm and keeping time is one and the same. For others, rhythm is something that makes people want to dance or tap their feet. No one wants to dance to a metronome. How did you present rhythm to your pedagogy class?

*SM: To clarify our terms, the use of the metronome relates to tempo, not to rhythm *per se*. Rhythm means to me the very foundation of music; it is one of the most basic ways to demonstrate musicality. I am particularly sensitive to rhythm because of my Cuban upbringing. Syncopation and a subtle rhythmic flair are basic to Cuban music. I have played and danced to my country's popular music, moving my feet and hips in step with the pulse.*

Before sharing some of my pedagogical approaches to rhythm, I want to stress that the ultimate end must culminate in rhythmic freedom. Whether it is a Cuban *bolero* or the Mendelssohn *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*, the approaches are the same. In the Mendelssohn *Introduction*, you have a melody perfectly matched to the left hand, note for note. I feel that great pianists of the past did not perform melodies so synchronized with their accompaniment. Singers don't sing that way either. Expressive melodies should have a life of their own. The timing of the notes in a lyrical right-hand passage does not necessarily have to be exactly one-on-one with the left hand.

KH: If you are a young student, that must be a very radical concept. It is probably why students sound like students no matter how well they prepare, and artists sound like artists. Chopin's long embellishments in many of the nocturnes pose such a challenge when trying to distribute fourteen notes in the right hand against four in the left hand, or any other odd combination.

SM: When you introduce those passages, the most unexpected things can happen. In breaking down the complexity, the student enters dangerous territory where execution, instead of at first sounding better, may temporarily sound worse. When students are unfamiliar with the repertoire and still lacking in rhythmic flair, they are apt to grossly exaggerate. Their interpretation becomes distortion. To teach how to pace that melody can be very elusive and frustrating. Ultimately it must sound as if improvised, which

seems to be the composer's intent.

KH: *Going back to basic concepts, what tools do you use in teaching rhythm?*

SM: I often make my students tap the rhythm of a piece with both hands on the closed key-cover, omitting notes and fingerings from this drill. I make sure that each note is given its exact duration value in order to emphasize that a good sense of rhythm requires precision as to the termination as well as the beginning of a sound. Rests become as important as notes. I often place my hand above a student's hand in order to feel the hand hitting mine on the way up at the end of a note value. The student then senses the end as strongly as the beginning.

Clapping can be used with small children when teaching a single melodic line. With them, it is also important to avoid using the same numbers for both fingerings and beats. Many recent beginning method books use words as a substitute for numbers in an attractive and clever way. Eventually the goal must be for students to read rhythmic patterns without referring to either words or numbers.

No. 20: The cultivation of musical taste.

We cannot avoid the fact that method books often contain simplified arrangements of familiar classical masterpieces.. We must avoid assigning arrangements outside of those already contain in a method book. Let a child understand that he/she can never reproduce the beauty and greatness of the last movement of the Beethoven Ninth Symphony outside of the context of the piece as written by Beethoven, for soloists, chorus and orchestra, by just playing the melody. Hearing a recording or attending a performance is the correct way for a child to experience a work so symphonic in scope, rather than in a simplified form reduced to almost nothing.

Students are surrounded by the popular music they like. In the little time we spend with them we should devote ourselves primarily to the teaching of the great repertoire with which they are not familiar. The inclusion of jazz-influenced pieces can be enticing to the student, while helping to develop a good sense of rhythm and introduce him or her to the idea of syncopation.

Folk music, in tasteful arrangements, will also contribute to the child's broader familiarity with diverse musical cultures. In my own upbringing, the mixture of Spanish, Cuban, African, and Jewish folk and popular music contributed greatly to my development as a musician.

America has made important contributions in the fields of popular song and musical theater. That which has become standard is widely available in published form at easy and intermediate levels. In assigning this material—especially if it is from the more recent musical theater productions—the student may be more familiar with it than the teacher. In my own experience, having taught so many students coming from Asia, I

don't recall encountering a student who ever attended a Broadway show. I once took the initiative to take a group of students to see *Fiddler on the Roof*. Sadly, few understood what was going on on stage!

No. 21: The importance of fingering.

KH: Before you continue your survey of the subject matter covered in your piano pedagogy classes, I would like to interrupt you as you approach the subject of fingering. I cannot imagine any teacher in the world who has been more concerned with its importance. You have always challenged us to come up with logical solutions to countless fingering problems. What I have learned from you in this area alone is astonishing.

SM: I own a copy of a very interesting book by the Romanian pianist, Julien Musafia, called *The Art of Fingering in Piano Playing*. In it, he quotes William Newman, who made the following statement in his own book, *The Pianist's Problems*: "The choice of, and adherence to a fingering on a keyboard instrument can make or break a piece. It can profoundly affect memorizing, stage poise, technical mastery, speed of learning and general security at the piano. Why then, is fingering so commonly neglected?"

Using the best and most logical fingering, for every note without exception, is fundamental to my teaching. It is very time consuming but nevertheless important for students to get a sense of all the possibilities available to them when deciding what fingering to use in a specific passage, whether technically challenging or not. It is a fascinating subject and I am never through with it, even with students at the most advanced level. It is not a question of whether or not they can play something very well with less than the best fingering. I am concerned about principles and my students' future roles as teachers. They have to know the rules and understand the rationale behind every decision.

KH: I will say that in working out my own fingerings as you instructed, I always felt afterwards that I was very much in control in learning each piece. What are your thoughts on editions with fingerings already included?

SM: Sometimes we can learn from editors. When you are to learn a Beethoven Sonata, you might want to find out how different editors solved specific problems by comparing editions in the library. One can learn from these comparisons if one is willing to analyze each decision and whatever logic there might be behind it, before just picking one and dismissing the others. One solution is not always best for everyone. The size of the hand and other physical attributes play a very important role.

In my own library, I have the following Beethoven editions: Urtext (Kalmus), Vienna Urtext, Urtext (Henle), Casella (Ricordi), Schnabel (Simon & Schuster), and Tovey (Associated Board). It gives me great pleasure to work out a specific fingering example with a student and then compare with all those editions in order to find who might or

might not agree with me. In many instances I have enjoyed having one of those expert editors confirm my judgment. In other instances, both the student and I have profited from realizing that a particular editor had a better solution. It is only the analysis of all the possibilities that will gradually build a knowledgeable approach to fingering.

This has also taught me that no editor can come up consistently with the most appropriate fingerings. In an extreme case with one of the fast Chopin preludes, consulting five different editions gave us the best solutions to successive measures, each from a different source.

KH: If you feel so strongly about using the best fingering, do you recommend that young teachers write in the fingerings for a new piece they assign?

SM: Absolutely not! Just the opposite. We want to make sure that the student learns to think when making choices. There is no better fingering lesson than the one a young student receives the week after an assignment has been made. By that time, the student has learned the piece with many fingering mistakes. Comparing his or her fingerings with the teacher's suggestions is the only way to realize why one is better than the other. This requires the teacher to explain the logic behind the choices. Just giving out good fingering is not instructive.

There is another element to be taken into consideration: developing the flexibility to change fingerings after better solutions have been found. This can happen a week later, or ten years later! Getting used to only one fingering without the freedom to change it is not ideal. Arriving at the best fingering might not happen immediately. It can be a process and trial and error. Once a decision has been made in every instance, sticking to it is of paramount importance.

The question posed by Mr. Newman at the end of his earlier quotation can only be answered by the realization that students seek the pleasure of playing the new music assigned, immediately. I don't mind for this pleasure to be enjoyed for a couple of readings of the score. At that point, the student has a choice: keep reading it over and over again until the music begins to flow, or make a decision to use the most thorough approach to the reading of the notes and the selection of the fingerings.

KH: My earlier teachers were never as concerned as you are about fingering. Is this something passed on to you from Gorodnitzki?

SM: Gorodnitzki was never detailed enough to sit down with me and work out the fingering of a passage. He made some important suggestions but he was never as specific as I later became.

No. 22: Memorization.

It is said that Clara Schumann was the first pianist to perform publicly by memory. Up until then, public concerts were by composers performing and conducting their own music. Clara established a tradition for performers and students alike, only modified by today's introduction of complex contemporary repertoire, normally played using the score. Important mnemonic elements discussed in class: finger memory, visual memory, aural memory, structural memory and theoretical analysis. Obviously, a multi-faceted approach to memorization rather than relying on any single one of these elements will produce a more secure performance. Unfortunately, the lack of a well-developed ear, particularly as it applies to the bass notes in the left hand, is often detrimental to secure memorization.

No. 23: Classification of repertoire.

My piano library is organized according to the following musical styles:

- (a) Pre-Baroque (Gabrieli, Merulo, Cabezón, Byrd, Bull, Dowland, Farnaby, Purcell *et al.*)
- (b) Baroque (Buxtehude, Telemann, Pachelbel, Froberger, Frescobaldi, J. S. Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Soler, Seixas, Rameau, Lully, Couperin *et al.*)
- I Early classical (Martini, Galuppi, Arne, Hasse, Cimarosa, Bach's sons *et al.*)
- (d) Classical (Haydn, Mozart, Clementi, Beethoven, Hummel, Schubert Sonatas, Weber *et al.*)
- (e) Romantic (Schubert short pieces, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, MacDowell, Grieg, Brahms, Dvořák, Franck *et al.*)
- (f) French (Saint-Saëns, Fauré, D'Indy, Chabrier, Debussy, Ravel, Satie, Poulenc, Ibert, Milhaud, Roussel, Messiaën, Dutilleux *et al.*)
- (g) Russian (Balakirev, Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Gretchaninoff, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, Prokofieff, Kabalevsky, Medtner, Miaskovsky, Khachaturian, Shostakovich *et al.*)
- (h) Spanish (Albéniz, Granados, Turina, Falla, Halffter, Mompou, Montsalvatge, Nin-Culmell, Rodrigo *et al.*)
- (i) Cuban (Saumell, I. Cervantes, Lecuona, Roldán, Caturla, Gramatges *et al.*)
- (j) Latin-American (Ginastera, Villa-Lobos, Chávez, Guarnieri *et al.*)
- (k) Early 20th-Century European (Schoenberg, Bartók, Kodály, Dohnányi, Szymanowski, Hindemith, Berg, Bloch, Webern, Honegger *et al.*)
- (l) American (Ives, Griffes, Copland, Gershwin, Antheil, Cowell, V. Thomson, Sessions, Barber, Menotti, Harris, Creston, Piston, Riegger, Dello Joio, Persichetti, Rochberg, Carter *et al.*)
- (m) Contemporary and Avant-Garde (Dallapiccola, Petrassi, Berio, Boulez, Lutoslawski, Stockhausen, Wuorinen, Kernis *et al.*)

This makes it easy for me to find music from every period and style for assignment to students at any age and level (although, it is convenient and economical to use collections and anthologies for students in the early stages).

Many of the above composers have written pieces for children. Unfortunately, most children play “melodic” pieces until they arrive in the class of a teacher willing to break the “melodic” barrier. Let us, each one, be such a teacher! We are now in the twenty-first century, yet much of the repertoire of the twentieth remains to be explored.

I had a student who played Boulez at age six. For this child, music could be beautiful without a melody. Many children can appreciate a painting by Picasso. Is *Guernica* actually beautiful? It represents war and desolation. Art often reflects life, which is not always beautiful. Young children have no prejudices about what is beautiful and what is not; they have curiosity and a healthy, open-minded outlook.

KH: When it comes to more advanced students, what is your approach to repertoire assignment?

SM: I will say this over and over again: students are like patients. They all have to be “cured,” of one malady or another! No matter how well they play, there is always something needed. I feel that a teacher is like a doctor who must know the right medicine. Selection of repertoire is the fundamental priority. If a teacher doesn’t know what repertoire to assign, he or she shouldn’t be teaching. Judging at competitions or giving auditions, I constantly encounter students playing the wrong music.

I am always disappointed with Russian participants who seem unable to play a Bach prelude and fugue with any sense of good Baroque style. What is most frustrating is that they always select the most romantic pair (Nos. 4, 8 and 22 from Book I), as if trying to find the Rachmaninoff in Bach! Worse, they seem to be listening to the music as if made of chord progressions, rather than realizing that the harmony is incidental to the counterpoint. Even though some might have enough poetic sensitivity for Mozart, the performances are usually spoiled by over-pedaling.

Of course, they never miss the opportunity to include one or more of the major Russian sonatas by Rachmaninoff, Scriabin or Prokofieff, for which they bring deeper insight and greater intimacy with the style. Their repertoire choice is usually a reflection on their teachers, who seem to be concentrating their lessons on the pieces they themselves know best.

There is always a vacuum with respect to non-virtuosic French repertoire, plus Bartók and most composers writing after 1925. It is as if the second half of the twentieth century did not happen, and this is not only a Russian problem. It is a problem in almost every country.

KH: What are the reasons?

SM: To answer that question might require another dissertation. In the case of Russia, we all know the negative influence of Stalin’s control of the Soviet arts scene. In the case

of China, they are still recovering from the cultural revolution. Great advances were once made there as a result of the initial input from Jewish immigration, mostly prompted by Russian anti-Semitism early in the twentieth century. Then came an influx of Jews fleeing the Nazi takeover of Germany and Austria, by way of boats departing from Italy directly to Shanghai, the only city in the world where a visa was not required.

Yuan Sheng has showed me a photo of a group of Chinese teenagers including his father, standing next to their string teacher, a European Jew, who prepared them to become the founding members of the first Chinese symphony orchestras. I even read a review in a Chinese/English periodical of the time of an all-Schoenberg concert that took place in 1936, performed by a personal friend of the composer who later emigrated to Canada. The later flux of Jewish emigration from China to the U.S., Canada and the newly created state of Israel (1948) had, in my opinion, a stultifying effect on China's newfound musical development, delaying its progress until rather recently.

KH: Do you have any specific recommendations for young teachers?

SM: I can accept a circumspect attitude from a young and inexperienced teacher who might feel insecure exploring unknown repertoire. What is not acceptable is for this attitude to continue for the next twenty or thirty years! It is not only the students who need to grow. The teachers must also grow! This reluctance to teach unfamiliar repertoire often leads to the assignment of pieces based on students' preferences rather than needs. The desire to please the students and impress them at the same time reflects personal insecurity, which has no place in guiding students.

KH: I never really thought about there being music that you as a teacher might not already know, but the repertoire is so vast, and new music is written every day, so that no one could possibly know it all. How do you handle this?

SM: You do not have to know all of the repertoire to teach music in specific styles you are already familiar with from previously taught pieces. Students have the advantage of listening to recordings, which I discourage until they develop a prior conception on their own. Then, more than one interpretation should be audited, contiguously, to avoid any tendency to imitation. Art students must see the works of the masters in museums when learning to paint and beyond.

KH: I have never heard of any student arguing with you about your repertoire assignments. What is the magic?

SM: I think I am a very persuasive person. I can tell you that I can back up my opinions about each piece that I assign with sound arguments. In the first place, I do not assign music based on my memory, because if I did, I would be teaching the same pieces over and over again, and how many pieces can we remember? But I am very lucky to have had the opportunity to acquire, I believe, a really comprehensive library as a private teacher, including recordings and scores. When I come to the moment of assignment, I open

drawers and come up with the right piece for whatever purpose. I believe my colleagues at MSM are pleasantly surprised by what my students bring to their exams. My choices are always geared toward growth and never toward hiding deficiencies.

KH: *What about the length of the jury programs your pupils present?*

SM: That's where I might get some resistance from the students. They know that the juries are fifteen to twenty minutes long. If they prepare too many pieces, the control of the quality might be diminished and the jury grade might reflect it. The question is: what are the students at MSM coming for? To get good grades, or to become artists?

The fact that at any specific moment they are able to perform at least a full-length recital, encompassing just about every style, will prepare them for the demands of a professional life. Successful pianists must travel with two or three complete programs and four or five concerti under their fingers, during any one season. If they cannot sustain that kind of pressure at whatever their appropriate level at MSM, a performing career should be out of the question.

KH: *I know you always ask your students what repertoire they would like to play in order to assess their level of taste and sophistication. I know you are sometimes disappointed. Have you had any students whose repertoire choices showed unusual imagination?*

SM: Yes! I will never forget my first meeting with Edward Laurel, who became a much sought-after accompanist. When I asked him which concerti he was interested in learning, he replied, "Schoenberg or Chávez." I couldn't believe it! It made me so happy! He eventually won the MSM concerto competition and performed the Schoenberg Concerto from memory.

Another memory feat was accomplished by Jessica Bruser, a Canadian pianist who won the concerto competition with the Lutoslawski Concerto. This fiendishly difficult work was dedicated to Krystian Zimerman, who recorded it but never memorized it. By coincidence, Leif Ove Andsnes performed it with the NY Philharmonic the week before Jessica played it at MSM. I attended his performance and he also read from the score. Not so with Jessica, who memorized it securely. She received a rave review from a Polish critic who added that he had never heard of *any* pianist playing it from memory.

KH: *What was the secret? How did she do it?*

SM: This work has page after page of arpeggios going up and down the keyboard without any pattern that can be ascertained while the string players individually improvise *glissandi* up and down. Even though it was a new piece to me, I was able to distribute the white and black keys with a fingering that began to give a sense of chord positions, thereby reducing to a fraction the number of individual figurations to be dealt with mentally. I can assure you that the right fingering made the difference!

KH: *You have now mentioned two winners of the MSM concerto competition who offered concerti that are out of the mainstream. Were there others?*

SM: If I include winners and alternate winners in both the College and Precollege division as well as in my international piano festivals, there are many. The list includes: the Barber (Sae Kyung Park and Maxim Anikushin), Liszt *Totentanz* (Jung Eun Lee), Piston *Concertino* (Simone Dinnerstein), Scriabin (Yuan Sheng and Weiwei Zhai), Stravinsky (Maria Salabasheva), Ravel *Left-Hand* (Bing Han and José Luis Castillo), Copland (Daniela Bracchi), Tchaikovsky No. 2 (Ren Zhang), Saint-Saëns No. 4 (Ren Zhang), Dohnányi *Variations* (Jovianney Emmanuel Cruz), Gershwin *Concerto in F* (Kookhee Hong and Alexandra Beliakovich), Françaix *Concertino* (Ellen Bart), Bloch *Concerto Grosso No. 1* (Aaron Shorr), Bartók No. 2 (Gustavo Díaz-Jerez), Bartók *Concerto for Two Pianos, Percussion and Orchestra* (Pérez-Molina brother/sister duo), as far as I can remember. There may be a few others.

I have also taught unusual concerto repertoire to other students of mine, some of which have been successfully performed in international competitions as well as with orchestras: Bernstein *Age of Anxiety* (Robert Buxton), Strauss *Burlesque* (Robert Buxton), Menotti (Jung Eun Lee), Poulenc *Aubade* (Jingjing Wang), MacDowell No. 1 (Kyung Un Rhee), MacDowell No. 2 (Kyung-Eun Rhee), Rodrigo (Edward Neeman), Surinach (Gustavo Díaz-Jerez), Beethoven *Choral Fantasy* (Albert Kim) and Falla *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* (Adam Kent).

KH: *Getting back to jury exams: some students need remedial work, especially when they have just entered school. Does this system make the remedial work difficult to carry out?*

SM: Well, it is hard to imagine an organized curriculum without testing what is being learned. I know that in some schools, juries can sometimes take place two or even three times a year. I believe that once a year is much better, because having to learn things under pressure quickly leads to sloppiness. For remedial work, it is much better to address problems through repertoire which may not be up to jury standards but is exactly what the student needs at the time.

Yes, it would be wonderful if a teacher could spend a whole year rebuilding certain students' foundations. In those cases, the jury is detrimental. It would be best if a teacher could have all the time to teach the basics as they are needed, before concentrating on the repertoire required for exposure in front of jurors. However, the fact is that the standards of acceptance at MSM are sufficiently high that a problem like this will seldom arise.

Another quality for a teacher is being practical. You can be a fine teacher but if you are too slow in delivering your points, and if you don't choose the right material to work on in the proper order, then the learning process slows down. The end result might still be excellent but will take too long. The exams do have the effect of keeping things moving along.

Finally, when the student becomes an active professional performer, meeting deadlines will be an important skill; learning to meet them in school is good preparation.

No. 24: Editions.

Most piano pedagogy materials have only one publisher and editor. Choices are made according to content and usefulness. This is an important subject as it relates to advanced repertoire. We must come back to it later on.

No. 25: Public performance.

Playing classes and student recitals can be very useful in setting standards, establishing goals and deadlines, and as overall incentives for improvement. Their success depends in part on the teacher's ability to select the right repertoire, as part of his correct assessment of the student's capacity for a secure performance. Listening to our students perform in front of an audience can be revealing beyond the mere assessment as to whether a performance meets the specific technical and musical challenges dealt with in preliminary lessons. It also reveals the student's ability to project his or her own involvement and enjoyment, and in so doing, to keep the interest of the audience.

That ability to project is the essence of a successful performing career. I remember attending a performance by a former student of mine, of a Beethoven piano concerto in a major concert hall in New York. After a few minutes, two men sitting in front of me began to peruse the printed program, apparently more interested in the restaurant ads. The performer could not hold their interest, demonstrating the difference between a diligent student and a successful artist.

No. 26: Ensemble playing.

In today's music world, participation in playing chamber and other collaborative forms of music performance is imperative for a developing performer. The benefits to be derived from making music with other musicians are myriad. Some students will choose collaborative performance as their final goal as professionals, but even those who emerge as soloists will derive valuable musical experience from ensemble playing.

At the early stages of learning music, ensemble playing can quickly advance the student's listening skills. It should not be reduced to only four-hand or two-piano ensemble. Working with other instrumentalists and singers should begin as soon as sight-reading ability permits.

No. 27: Contemporary music.

Teachers need to take the initiative to research this ever-changing repertoire thoroughly and include it in their assignments. I often glance over the programs posted on Saturday

morning at the MSM Precollege Division and I am often disappointed with the lack of contemporary and other interesting pieces being played, although I am proud to notice that former students who currently teach there seem to be up-to-date with this category of repertoire.

No. 28: Group teaching.

In my own experience, I found it impossible to find two young students so well matched that they could profit from having their piano lesson at the same time. In fact, students are physically very different from one another. In learning to play, they need individual attention. Otherwise, I have already outlined the benefits of teaching supplementary subjects such as theory, ear training, in group settings, particularly for those students who do not attend music schools.

No. 29: Recommending a piano to a student for purchase.

Every teacher must be ready to advise as to brands, sizes, types, levels of quality, new *vs.* used (or rebuilt), and prices. This subject should be researched and it takes years to become an expert. A tuner/technician with no vested interest, experienced and trustworthy, can be helpful and informative. It is expected that a teacher be a responsible and knowledgeable professional in this regard. Protecting the student's immediate and long-term interests should be the most important priority.

No. 30: Recommending a piano tuner.

I would give a similar answer to the one I gave about recommending a piano: the teacher must be ready to advise.

No. 31: Professional expectations—a concert *vs.* a teaching career.

The reality is that we teachers spend most of our time, lesson after lesson, year after year, improving our students' performance level without taking into consideration that the proficiency attained will be usefully employed by only a handful of them. Most of our students will make their living as teachers rather than performers. We must spend more time preparing them for that task.

In order to do so, we must relate our solutions and suggestions to the principles that make them applicable to similar situations throughout the literature. In other words, always offer specific technical and musical indications in the broader context of possible future application.

The responsibility of teaching a student that has what it takes to aspire to a performing career is great. Keeping a correct balance between delivering information and nurturing the student's individuality as the years go by, is perhaps the greatest challenge the teacher faces. Gifted students must be exposed to different interpretive possibilities. There are

choices to be made, artists to be emulated, recordings to be treasured, all within the parameters of the student's talents and inclinations, while encouraging the student's sense of personal artistic identity.

This ends the items of my pedagogy course outline, although I am sure that there remain topics of interest for us to explore.

KH: May we continue with one of your concerns that influenced me profoundly? The development of the pianist as a complete person.

SM: I am glad you emphasized "as a person." I feel fortunate to have grown up as a product of a mix of many cultural elements, allowing me to see the world around me from a broad perspective. Living in New York for many decades has added to making me a sort of "world citizen." I have also traveled a lot and experienced living within different cultures for extended periods of time.

Therefore, I am sensitive to the shortcomings innate to students who see the world from a narrow point of view, limited to their home-country traditions. I am as much interested in my pupils absorbing a broad and all-encompassing attitude toward life and people as I am in their musical and pianistic development. I am interested in each of them as a whole person.

Sometimes it is very hard to fight the reluctance of many students to reach out to others with different national, racial, cultural or religious backgrounds. An equally serious problem is lack of curiosity, the most pervasive obstacle to education. With such attitudes, students miss much that the opportunity to study in a cosmopolitan hub like New York can offer them. A lack of cultural sophistication and experience will prevent a talented student from becoming a true artist!

Teaching is very frustrating when students lack curiosity and show an apathetic attitude. I keep coming back to this because it is so related to mediocrity. I reflect on my own development: what was my own attitude as I was growing up? I took every course that could fit into my schedule. I attended concert after concert, not only for piano, but symphonic, opera, dance, ballet, chamber music, choral, everything! I read books articles and reviews. I wasn't limited to music.

I loved to read how critics described paintings or exhibits at the Metropolitan Museum, for example. I don't think that anybody can achieve anything important just by playing very well if there is no culture behind it. I am always urging students to read the *New York Times* and learn what is going on beyond the musical world as well. Art is a reflection of life and the world. The student cannot grow into an artist without growing as a person. There is a need for attitudes and points of view that reflect values and principles. They must be the result of awareness, knowledge and insight. The world must have an impact on you for you to have an impact on the world.

With all of this in mind, you can imagine my frustration in Toledo, Spain when my own students, with little time left, chose to go shopping instead of going to see an El Greco masterpiece. Many of them have the same attitude during the time they spend in New York. The idea is that practicing many hours every day, following the teacher's instructions and getting good grades in their courses is all that they feel they need in order to succeed.

Once I took a long drive with three other music teachers, two pianists and a guitarist who was sitting next to me in the front passenger seat. The two of us in front spent more than one hour talking about guitarists, guitar composers and guitar repertoire in general. At the end of the ride, the two pianists, personal friends, described to me their amazement as to my knowledge about the subject. I was rather surprised, and a bit disappointed that they were unable to contribute a single thought to the exchange.

More recently, I had a breakfast meeting with Henry Fogel, the new Dean of the Chicago College of Performing Arts, a distinguished arts administrator and a man of impressive culture. I very quickly realized that he loves singers and the vocal arts. How did we spend the next two hours? Talking about that very subject!

Let's suppose that this meeting had been part of the process for my appointment as future piano faculty member. Were I not able to sustain that conversation with equal knowledge and enthusiasm as the Dean's, I might not have made the impression that would have been required for confirmation. Isn't this the situation that MSM graduates face when applying for a conservatory or university position? If I were the hiring dean, would I even consider adding anyone to the faculty who is unable to sustain a conversation outside of his or her specialty?

What about the hundreds of meals I have had in five-star hotels, not only with fellow jurors but also with political figures, mayors, cultural advisors and benefactors? How could I survive if I could not engage in dialogue about food, wine, architecture, history, politics and myriad other subjects? Beyond that, how is it possible to be pleasant company if one is unable to demonstrate a sophisticated sense of humor, in itself requiring all of that cultural background?

KH: Was there a specific experience in your upbringing that led you to the life approach you practice now?

SM: In order to respond to that, I have to talk about my love of great movies. That is no easy subject, as it involves great writers, directors and actors, working parallel to the evolution of cinematography. When I was young, I went to the movies for entertainment and to be with my friends. It was my best chance to sit in a dark place for a couple of hours next to a beautiful girl I might have been in love at that time, even if I was too shy to even talk to her. Most of those movies were superficial Hollywood trash.

In 1953, when I was seventeen years old, I saw a Mexican film, *La Red* (The nest; English title: *Rosanna*). It was in black and white, and showed fishermen fishing without any dialogue. I couldn't believe that anybody would dare to produce such a boring movie. A couple of weeks later, I was sitting next to a table where six or seven leading intellectuals in Cuba were discussing this film. Their excitement and admiration for the film, its director Gabriel "Indio" Fernández, the photographer Figueróa and the music by Silvestre Revueltas, were overwhelming. They all agreed it was a masterpiece!

What was I to do? Dismiss them all as crazy or stupid? I decided that something was wrong—not with them, but with me! I clearly had something to learn. I went to see *La Red* again, taking into consideration some of the comments I had overheard. I began to understand, but it took another couple of screenings to begin to realize its artistic content.

A similar transformation, all on my own, took place when my older sister Luisa gave me a recording of the Chopin Sonata No. 2 played by Malcuzyński. I played it over and over again. One day I decided to hear Side 2, the *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue* by César Franck. I fell asleep! Sometime later I listened to it again. This time I began to like it. Eventually, I listened to the Franck many more times than the Chopin. What does it all mean? There is no question that both works are masterpieces. The Chopin had the more immediate appeal for me. However, that experience introduced me to Franck, who became one of my favorite composers.

Great art needs our concentration, patience and discipline to learn to appreciate it. We must find the curiosity to investigate it! This investigation might involve becoming acquainted with an unfamiliar style, one which isn't always instantly gratifying. I have witnessed my own students going through this process when finally learning to enjoy Bartók and Schoenberg, after only experiencing Debussy and Prokofieff as their "moderns." A vivid example of my curiosity is the way that I search for new restaurants and order dishes I've never tried before. I have even made copies of *The New York Times* restaurant reviews to distribute among my students so that they can become aware that food is art, and that eating the same dishes over and over is to omit a whole cultural dimension from their lives.

I recently had a very interesting experience. A friend introduced me to a very wealthy and incredibly nice Chinese man, Stephen Lau, who owns a luxury hotel in Hong Kong and who flew to Beijing for the express purpose of inviting me, along with colleagues and former students, to a pair of unforgettable private meals in two of the finest restaurants in that city. What prompted him to do such an extravagant thing? Well, it transpired that we have something in common: we enjoy gourmet food. When I met him in New York prior to my trip to Beijing, he asked me if I liked Chinese cooking. I had no hesitation in expressing my admiration for Chinese cuisine and I described my experience many years ago at the National Airport in Taipei, where I attended an exhibit of the most exotic creations by some of the foremost Chinese chefs in the world. He asked me where I remembered having had my best Chinese meal. When I mentioned that it was in

Chinatown in Melbourne, Australia, he was impressed. It seems that the sea waters near Melbourne offer several species of fish much sought after by Chinese gourmet chefs.

He immediately suggested that I come to Hong Kong in order to fly together in his private jet to Melbourne (five hours!) to share a meal there. Even more impressive for him was when I recalled that the tastiest Chinese broccoli I ever ate had been in Singapore. He was quite pleased to find someone who shared his excitement about great Chinese cuisine, and many times thereafter I enjoyed his invitations to some of the best restaurants in New York to dine with him and his business associates.

Anyone reading this portion of this thesis will wonder what all of this has to do with piano pedagogy. It gives me the opportunity to emphasize the many aspects of cultural appreciation and life experience, and their relevance to building an artistic career. Professional success will depend in some part on the ability to cultivate persons of influence in the arts, including potential benefactors, as colleagues and friends.

KH: I have always been fascinated by your persistence in urging your students to explore repertoire outside of the mainstream.

SM: It is unfortunate that some teachers feel uncomfortable when they teach pieces they have not played themselves. It becomes a vicious cycle. One of the most fascinating elements in my teaching career has been the exploration of vast amounts of unusual and unjustly neglected repertoire.

I can understand the benefits to be derived from teaching pieces one has mastered when demonstrations at the piano are required. However, open-mindedness toward interpretation and changes in musical taste can only be the result of the concurrent learning of new pieces by teacher and student.

KH: Can you list some of the composers whose works you have taught that will fall into that category?

SM: I hate to attempt to list them because no matter how many composers I include I still do scant justice to the vast amount of non-traditional repertoire that my students have played in over four decades of my teaching. I have taught piano works by Soler, Weber, Hummel, Grieg, Dvořák, MacDowell, Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Chabrier, Poulenc, Albéniz, Granados, Falla, Rodrigo, Mompou, Szymanowski, Hindemith, Dallapiccola, Petrassi, Lutoslawski, and many, many others. I have also taught many lesser-known pieces by well-known composers, such as Scarlatti, Beethoven, Bartók and Prokofieff. Moreover, my library includes interesting transcriptions and concerto cadenzas which are seldom performed these days.

As you know, an important part of my traveling has been visiting music stores and libraries to find scores that are not readily available. Over all these years, I have assembled a library of my own of which I am very proud. There is only one problem: I

will not live long enough to read all the books, listen to all the recordings, and teach all the scores I own!

KH: As we both know it is almost impossible for a not-so-famous pianist to attract a New York Times critic to a debut concert that does not include intelligent and sophisticated programming.

SM: I always keep on top of the piano sample programs of young pianists who are making a mark in the concert world, to show to my students. When a young pianist is fortunate enough to attract a *NY Times* critic, the review usually demonstrates a special interest, not only in the artistry of the pianist, but also in the content of the program itself. A thematic plan to the program, where works have some kind of relationship, as well as inclusion of seldom played pieces that deserve attention, seems to be a requirement. An important premiere can be particularly helpful.

Advising a student as to debut programs in a major concert hall has become a particularly difficult challenge to teachers. One needs to consider the effectiveness of the pieces to be played, as well as variety of styles and character. All of this can have financial consequences if there is a need to sell tickets. Also to be considered is the importance of repertoire that shows a performer at his or her best. If we add to all of that the incentives required to attract a critic, the challenge can be daunting.

KH: Don't you feel frustrated when having to constantly correct the bad habits many of us have acquired during previous years of study?

SM: I am certainly not the only teacher who feels that kind of frustration! When I started teaching at MSM, I spent five years teaching only at the Precollege Division. After joining the College Division, I still kept a large class of Precollege students from many countries.

I immensely enjoyed the responsibility of establishing a solid musical and technical foundation. In many ways, I will confess that *that* is the kind of work I do best. As I explained earlier in Part I, there no longer exists the same young international student base to draw from. But I still do remedial work with some of my first-year MSM college students, as needed.

Results vary, of course. Bad habits are hard to get rid of. Some teachers can be very good at teaching “the right way,” but might be less effective in changing approaches and habits. An important consideration is the difficulty of focusing on basics when a college curriculum demands an irreducible amount of advanced repertoire to be mastered within a proscribed time period.

I have had to do everything. Although remedial work is certainly not the most pleasurable part of teaching, it does put your knowledge to the test and sharpens your teaching skills. In a teaching career, it is unavoidable.

That is why that I give more credit to the teacher who prepares a student for a master class performance over a long period of patient work, than to the artist-teacher who deals exclusively with subtle interpretive details in the space of forty minutes. What would most of those great performer-artist-teachers do if confronted with a performance that took place only one week after the piece had been assigned to the student? It is always refreshing when credit is given where credit is due.

KH: *You recently had the opportunity to work with a very young child.*

SM: It was quite a unique experience, because he is very talented. He was brought to me when he was only four years old. I worked with him until he was eleven.

KH: *What was the most important element in your teaching?*

SM: Good reading. When he came to me, he was playing many pieces by rote. Instead of continuing his concentration on two or three big pieces that would make his parents happy, I gave him more than fifty pieces to learn during the first couple of years which kept him reading new music all the time. I trained his fingers and his brain to adapt quickly to new patterns that he could then recognize when encountering them again in ever more sophisticated versions. He was even playing a one-page piece by Boulez at age six! This gave him the skills to learn more difficult pieces very quickly.

KH: *It is certainly easier to use this approach when dealing with children at the precollege level. Unfortunately, the demands of auditions, juries and recitals at the college level make it necessary to devote a substantial amount of the lesson time to large works.*

SM: I don't find that to be such a problem. As I mentioned before, my extensive library is divided by periods. I use it for reference when assigning repertoire. I open drawers for each period and I always find the exact pieces that are needed for a student to make progress at his or her level and, at the same time, meet the deadlines of the school curriculum. There always has to be a balance between standard and unusual repertoire, easier and more difficult, shorter and longer, while filling in all the vacuums that the student has brought from years of deficient study.

KH: *I know how upset you always get when a young student arrives in your studio, who has played no more Schumann than Carnival, no other impressionistic music than Scarbo and no other Liszt than Mephisto Waltz.*

SM: Yes, it is frustrating. You can imagine how beneficial it would be to play *Papillons* or the *Abegg Variations* before embarking on a larger work by Schumann, or to play a Debussy prelude before playing such a difficult work by Ravel. It is a disservice to the student when so many teachers "introduce" a composer by assigning the most difficult piano work in the latter's output. That is why I always ask students to submit to me a list

of the repertoire they have covered in their previous studies. That is the clearest reflection of the student's past training and the problems that lie ahead.

KH: *Is there a particular repertoire where this problem is especially acute?*

SM: French music, by far! Instead of stressing the new experience of dealing with impressionistic sonorities, teachers assign *L'Isle Joyeuse* as the first piece by Debussy only because it is one of the most virtuosic and brilliant of his works. Debussy is used for the wrong purpose, and therefore taken in the wrong direction. Another example of this misguidance is when students play *Feux d'Artifice* before any other prelude. Teachers should realize that Debussy is an ideal composer for exploring the tonal possibilities of the piano.

Too many piano students and teachers seem to equate studying the piano with becoming a star athlete. Volume, speed and technical challenges become the main concerns! I remember hearing a losing contestant complain to another student that he thought he had "nailed" the Liszt *Campanella*!

KH: *Earlier, you have stressed the importance of a beautiful tone. Do you recommend certain repertoire to introduce and illustrate your principles?*

SM: I believe that we must stress this concept with every note, even with the most rudimentary materials for beginners, until a beautiful tone is a firmly established habit. For the early grades, the Schumann *Album for the Young*, and the Bergmüller *25 Easy and Progressive Études*, Op. 100 can be helpful. At a more advanced level, the *Songs Without Words* by Mendelssohn should be explored before the introduction of the Chopin *Nocturnes*. The latter are based on a single melody in the right hand, with accompaniment by the left hand. Again, a teacher has to make sure that the *Nocturnes* are played in progressive order of difficulty. Some of them are very polyphonic and can complicate the teacher's intent to deal with development of tone.

Learning scherzos and ballades before playing a single nocturne is as nonsensical as learning *Carnaval* before *Papillons*. Step-by-step learning is the only way that can allow teachers to succeed in instilling all the principles of beautiful playing in a manner comprehensible to the student, without overwhelming.

This often requires a great deal of patience from the teacher. I still remember the first nocturne that Gorodnitzki assigned me, right from the start. Before I even began to play the piece, I spent a couple of lessons dealing only with the production of tone on single notes, using every finger of each hand, with his insistence described previously that I imagine the quality of tone in advance of producing it.

KH: *Is this a more difficult problem with melodies written for the left hand?*

SM: There is no question that playing a beautiful melody is easier with the right hand than with the left hand. Most melodies have been written for the right hand, and we train ourselves along those lines. That is why I often ask a student playing a melody written for the left hand to actually practice it first with the right hand and even both hands together before attempting to play it with the left hand alone. One can say that the right hand becomes the teacher, the left the student.

I have had two students over the years who performed the Ravel Left-Hand Concerto with MSM orchestras. In each case, they practiced as if Ravel had written it for two hands. The challenge, then, was to re-learn it equally beautifully with the left hand alone, having already built a conception not governed by technical limitations.

This approach took place with a third student, but only by accident. The piece was assigned for summer study and was brought back to me in September as a two-hand performance. A lack of knowledge of French—and of the literature!—kept the student from understanding the intent of the composer.

KH: You have always incorporated actual singing into your teaching.

SM: For me, a pianist must also be a singer, capable of implying a vocal sense through our beloved instrument. Students who are unable or unwilling to sing are deprived of the opportunity to sense the beauty of music with their own bodies. I very often try to imitate with my voice the tone, phrasing and character that a student has just executed, followed by my vocal impression of the correction. This invariably makes them aware of the vast difference between the way they play and how a singer would approach the same passage. Chopin was even of the opinion that to master the piano, one should also take singing lessons.

The goal is very simple: we must eliminate the sense of keys being pressed and of tone dying away. Transferring the weight applied to each note from one to the next will produce the sense of vocal continuity that we seek.

KH: When you taught in the precollege divisions of both Juilliard and MSM, you were developing students' skills from much earlier stages than you do now. What are your reflections on those earlier teaching years, working with the younger students?

SM: As I mentioned in the biographical portion, the early years of my own training left a lot to be desired. I was lazy, had a very permissive teacher, never attended concerts and, without effort on my part, I was considered a genius.

I have regretted how much time I wasted as a student. Consequently, I became a very demanding teacher of my own young students. I was obsessed with them doing everything “the right way”. There is no question that a solid early foundation is crucial to realizing our long-term potential. Wasted time can never be recouped.

KH: *When you mention a “solid early foundation,” where do you begin?*

SM: We have already enumerated the many elements that must work simultaneously in our teaching for best results. Since the fingers are the first in contact with the keys, the role they have in piano playing is primary. They are called upon to play with speed and clarity in vast portions of the repertoire.

Many students are able to achieve speed, but clarity escapes them. They spend years playing Hanon exercises, which cleverly avoid the need to spend time learning notes, being based on repetitive patterns going up and down the keyboard. I find it useful to ask my new advanced students to play the first exercise by Hanon as rapidly and clearly as they can. Almost invariably they achieve good speed but no clarity. I then ask them to play the exercise again and try to achieve this clarity. What I usually get back from them is simply a louder version, often assisted by an up-and-down movement of the wrist to deliver more weight on every note.

Seldom can they find the solution. I then imitate them by playing very fast but keeping my fingers down rather than raising them up immediately when each next note is played. At any particular moment there might be two, three or even four keys that have not returned. The end result is a bloody mess. The next step is to point out to them that during all their years of Hanon practice, they have been training the lower muscle of the forearm that pulls the fingers down, and have ignored the upper muscle of the forearm that brings the fingers up. Therein lies the secret of clarity. Now every note is independent.

The concept of using Hanon exercises to “strengthen” the fingers is moot when you practice them *forte*, not realizing that volume is achieved by the use of arm-weight on every note instead of letting each finger do the work. Fingers have small muscles that cannot achieve such loud sounds on their own and create a good tone at the same time. Therefore, I ask my students who can profit from Hanon exercises for a while to play them *piano*, making sure that one hears only one note at a time, no matter how fast the tempo.

KH: *This approach was very useful for me. Without it, I don’t think you could have ever been satisfied with my performances of the Chopin Étude, Op. 10, No. 4. However, I remember you referring to scales as being “slow melodies, played fast.” That implies a more legato approach. How do you reconcile these two points of view?*

SM: First of all, let’s give credit to Schnabel for that statement. The fact that I stress clarity in scales does not mean that they should be played in the same way in the context of a musical passage. The clarity that many students have failed to achieve in their technique obliges them to work too hard at the time it is needed for a performance. When clarity is part of your technical control, you can apply it in full or in part, according to the artistic result desired.

This is a technique that I enjoy applying to Bach's keyboard works, whereby I make a decision as to whether a phrase has either vocal or instrumental connotation. The contrast of legato and non-legato is a very effective way to achieve variety consistent with the demands of the music.

This can be carried further, all the way into impressionistic music. Getting back to the master class on *Ondine* by Ravel at the Moscow Conservatory that I mentioned in Part I, what sounded "impressionistic" to the audience was nothing else than playing the notes with a total lack of clarity while keeping the pedal down. My insistence on the opposite produced much better results: clarity in the texture, with a beautiful tone on every note, surrounded by only the amount of pedal needed to produce a magical atmosphere.

KH: All of this makes a lot of sense when I think that you always made me play every piece, in every style, a bit under tempo without pedal, no louder than mezzo-piano, and with the utmost non-legato clarity, and that applied even to the most beautiful legato melodies one could find in the literature.

SM: On that foundation of clarity and solidity, we can superimpose all the interpretive possibilities at our disposal. After practicing a melody with just the fingers, we can make a hundred-percent turnaround and approach it with all the resources needed to make it flow and produce a totally different effect.

Many teachers espouse a "musical" approach to practice in every instance. I, on the other hand, have come to realize the benefits from keeping our emotions "under wraps" during our physical practice in order to only give in to the demands of our heart and soul at the climax of our practice session. This can help avoid the boredom that can result from excessive repetition and expenditure of our emotional resources, keeping them fresh and vibrant for the actual performance.

KH: Can you review for our readers, your various approaches to staccato?

*SM: There are instances when a staccato passage is so fast that only a small finger motion can do it justice. It feels as if one is plucking the strings for every key. A perfect example of the application of this technique with the right hand is in Variation 13 of the *Variations Sérieuses* by Mendelssohn. At a lesser speed but still rapid tempo, the very small down-and-up motion of the hand from the wrist produces a "wrist staccato." A perfect example of its application would be the final section *Allegro* from Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6*, first through single notes and then in octaves.*

KH: Is there any difference in approach when using wrist staccato in single notes vs. octaves?

SM: There are two issues to consider: I always favor keeping the balance tilted toward the high note of the octave. In musical interpretation, stressing either the bell-like quality of the higher notes in the right hand or the warmth of the lower notes played by the right

hand thumb can produce an interesting effect, which I find useful in *Pierrot* from *Carnaval* by Schumann through a portamento approach, or in the second piece in *Kreisleriana* through a legato approach.

Many of these balancing ideas are applicable to the left hand, although one has to consider the important role that the bass line plays in establishing the harmonic foundation and balancing the melodies singing in the right hand. A sense of polyphony should always prevail. Octaves should often be heard as parallel melodies rather than a doubling of a single melody.

The other issue has to do with stretching. A work like the *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6*, with page after page of octave playing, should only be part of the repertoire of pianists with large hands, who feel no sense of stretching when playing octaves and can keep their wrists totally relaxed while producing a singing tone on the higher notes. Endurance plays an important role and it should be developed very gradually without stress or tension.

KH: *Your approach to finger and wrist staccato involves a relaxed approach. Can firmness play any role in staccato playing?*

SM: Absolutely! I call it “arm-staccato.”

KH: *Any examples of its application?*

SM: I can mention two that come to mind: the eighth notes in the F-major two-part invention by Bach, and the first two measures in the first movement of the Beethoven Sonata, Op. 2, No. 1. In these two examples, I strive for a woodwind quality with the bassoon as inspiration. To produce that kind of sound, the arm and wrist must be in a straight line moving up and down from the elbow without the break caused by a flexible wrist.

KH: *Doesn't this go against the principle of beautiful tone, requiring a flexible wrist?*

SM: That's a very good question. We must always be concerned with the beauty of tone when playing notes that last long enough for it to become an issue of paramount importance. When playing short notes at *piano* level, in those examples mentioned, the last thing we want is to make them sound rich and melodic. The bassoon effect I referred to is what I prefer. Music needs contrast; constant singing can be monotonous.

As much as I strive for my students to achieve the beauty and warmth of tone required in romantic melodic playing, nothing disturbs me more than applying the same approach to passages that do not call for it. When a student fails to sense the approach needed for a particular passage, I ask for it to be sung (I might do it myself) in order to ascertain whether this particular passage has a melodic character or whether it is performing a

different textural function.

KH: *Can finger-, wrist- and arm-staccato handle every situation where staccato is required?*

SM: Piano playing and doing justice to the immense literature that has been composed requires creative use of our resources. We often must mix various technical approaches. But, in answer to your question, I ask you to imagine whether any of those three types of staccatos described above could do justice to the opening solo passage in the Liszt Concerto in E-flat? The need for a big sound calls for the support of all possible weight we can muster with the wrists acting as shock-absorbers. If the wrists are too relaxed, the sound will be warm but lacking in brilliance. A little stiffness can add a bit of metallic edge that can highlight the pianist over a full orchestra.

Both soloist and teacher must pay a lot of attention to this balance between flexible and stiff wrists, in accordance with the pianist's physical resources and the acoustics of the hall. The sound created must be the final criterion.

KH: *It is obvious that many of your answers to technical questions are influenced by the challenges imposed by interpretive considerations. Can you think of other examples?*

SM: Just as in my discussion of balance in playing octaves, one can apply the same principle to passages that involve two melodies in the same hand. Very often we will find fingering where the editor's concern is mainly to make sure that both voices are played legato. This can often be detrimental to the idea of balance. The hand must be relaxed enough for the wrist to play its important role of helping the top melody sing out with consistent dominance. The remedy lies in allowing the lower voice a contrasting, less legato touch, which actually can contribute to a heightened sense of polyphony. The thumb will often be used on adjacent notes, with the subtle help of the pedal. The end result is theoretically less legato, but the flow contributes to an even better sense of *legato*, also more *cantabile* and polyphonic.

KH: *In striving for a differentiation between voices, you arrive at the conclusion that a certain fingering can be helpful in achieving it. Are there other means?*

SM: Let's take for example, the beginning of the second movement of the Prokofieff Sonata No. 7. We basically have two melodies being played at the same time, in parallel motion. A subtle approach to the rhythm, whereby the melodies are not always played exactly together, can give a sense of two Russian peasants singing a duet without rehearsal.

Sometimes, rhythmic perfection in duet playing can be detrimental to the character of the music. This can be carried even further if we compare the old trio recordings by Thibault, Casals and Cortot with more modern recordings of the same repertoire. It is my contention that those three great instrumentalists were able to superimpose their

individual approaches to interpretation, beyond the confines of what we refer to as perfect ensemble playing.

That is why I prefer a freer approach to the duet in the Prokofieff Sonata. The impression of having been rehearsed to perfection robs the music of its earthiness and folk character.

KH: In the case of the Prokofieff Sonata, you seem to strive for independence of voices in separate hands. Can you think of an example in the literature when there are two voices in just one hand, applying the same differentiation?

SM: This approach should be welcome in innumerable places. Relating the various voices as if each one was a character in an opera can be very helpful. We can learn from Bellini and Verdi. There is no better specific example than Ignaz Friedman's recording of the Chopin Nocturne in E-flat, Op. 55, No.2. Right from the start, we hear expressive melodic playing surrounded by contrasting short motives, light and elegant, as though two different characters were in conversation. The traditional approach to the interpretation of this nocturne emphasizes the warmth and expressiveness that most students and many pianists seek in every melody of Romantic music. When I hear such playing, I feel like I am bored, attending an opera performance where everyone on stage is crying. Friedman shows us a better way!

KH: You have already touched on the Liszt Hungarian rhapsody No. 6 and its advisability for larger hands only. How do you approach teaching students with small hands?

*SM: In general, I find that students fall into two categories: those who favor power and virtuosity, and those who favor poetry and intimacy. Of course, it would be an exaggeration to claim that a sensitive student would not enjoy playing a Hungarian Rhapsody, or that a virtuoso student would not enjoy working on a Schubert *Moment Musical*. It is a matter of taste. When I encounter a student with small hands, my immediate goal is for that student to develop a taste for the poetic and to demur at playing something to which he or she could not do justice with small hands.*

It is frustrating to have a student who wants to play the bombastic pieces by Liszt and cannot, and at the same time does not appreciate the pleasures to be derived from playing Schubert. What a pity! In such a case, while trying to please the student with not-too-challenging virtuoso piece, I try, very often with success, to educate the student's taste towards performing music to which he or she can do justice. The art of finding accessible music that only sounds difficult is one of the intriguing challenges that we teachers face regularly.

Such students tend to favor repertoire with which they will impress their relatives and friends. Speed and volume seems to be the first priority. Massive chords are a *sine qua non*. I always remind them of my own experience when I attended a concert at Hunter College sponsored by the International Piano Library in the early 1970s. Some of the

greatest virtuosi participated, each one playing a piece more bombastic than the other. At the end, the Australian pianist Bruce Hungerford concluded with a set of *Ländler* by Schubert. The applause he received was the most thunderous of all!

KH: *I remember some of your students with very small hands that somehow manage to cover up their limitations through your choice of repertoire. What rationale did you follow in your selections?*

SM: One of my students was assigned the Liszt Polonaise No.1 in C Minor. In this work, there is a central section that is quite demanding physically. However, it does not last very long and there is plenty of material coming before and after those passages which is comfortable. That is the difference when assigning a Chopin ballade rather than a Chopin scherzo. Virtuoso sections must alternate with lyrical ones, so that periods of tension and stress alternate with periods of recovery.

KH: *Did you ever encounter a student with very small hands whose repertoire expectations were beyond his or her means?*

SM: Yes, I did. He asked me for permission to inquire of another teacher who was basing her reputation on the premise that “anyone can play anything.” I agreed, and was eager to find out the results. In trying to resolve the tension problems created by stretching his hands to play octaves the teacher suggested for him to close his hands in between octaves in order to relax. Since this particular student wanted to master the Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6*, the teacher’s advice seemed impractical and even ludicrous. The student had no choice but to face reality.

I must remind you again that the act of stretching can create a tension that precludes the beauty of sound we should strive for when playing octaves or single notes. In addition, the damage that constant stretching can inflict on the tendons has sometimes compromised performing careers.

KH: *There must have been pianists with large hands who also favor the more lyrical repertoire.*

SM: Clara Haskil is a perfect example. One of the world’s greatest artists, she was not famous for playing Liszt or Rachmaninoff. I know that Brendel played just about everything early on (he recorded *Islamey* and *Petrushka*), but eventually developed a career as a Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert player.

Dinu Lipatti recorded the Mozart Sonata in A minor, the Chopin Waltzes and Chopin B minor Sonata. He was not a Rachmaninoff player, didn’t play *Pictures at an Exhibition*, it was not in his nature. Does that mean it is bad to play *Pictures at an Exhibition*? If you are Horowitz or Richter, why not? It is wonderful, but Horowitz or Richter were different from Lipatti.

Every pianist has to find the music that fits his or her spirit and physical make-up. The responsible teacher should help to find those pieces, and to determine what is that student's best artistic showcase. When I assign repertoire, I take very much into consideration the amount of time and effort that will be needed for a student to master any one of the pieces I have selected. On one occasion, when a student asked me to assign her the *Appassionata*, and I suggested a more accessible classical sonata, she decided to change to another teacher. A year later, I heard her play parts of it in her jury examination. She did quite well. She was able to learn it and play it. Does that mean that I made a mistake in her case? What do you, Kookhee, have to look at in order to assess my judgment?

KH: What else did she play in her jury exam? How did she handle the other pieces?

SM: Those are exactly the questions I wanted to hear from you! There is a lot of merit to learning and mastering, to a satisfactory level, such a difficult work. The question is, was the investment in time and effort proportionate to the benefits gained? The rest of her program was rather trivial, not up to the same level. There is your answer!

I have to repeat this principle to students all the time. Progress is based on a step-by-step approach whereby constant attention to every fine detail by the teacher should not be required. Too big a piece too soon means that progress might stop or slow down in other areas, just to satisfy the student's ego. The effort in performing music that is still beyond the student's current capabilities is often noticed by audiences, and of course, by jurors. I strongly believe that playing should always be rather effortless and pleasurable.

KH: Don't you also have to consider whether or not a specific work requested fits with your plans regarding your student's long-term development?

SM: In the long-term development, there will be a point when it's to the student's benefit to begin to think about specialization. A delicate pianist with an affinity for Mozart and smaller Schumann pieces, and who mistakenly tries to venture into more rugged territory of virtuoso Liszt or Rachmaninoff pieces may develop physical problems that could seriously impair or even end his or her career. In other words, we must not create musical goals that go against nature; every artist is limited by his or her unique physical make-up and temperament.

We succeed when we discover our true talents and give them our best efforts. When we try to be something we are not, we are in dangerous territory. At an advanced level, it will be important to begin to assess whether the student's future career will be in performing or in teaching. A future performer should be interested in a degree of specialization of repertoire, whereas a future teacher should be interested in exposure to the widest variety possible.

KH: We all know the many hours of practice, day after day, week after week, month after month and even the years that it takes to develop the physical endurance and power

needed to master the great virtuoso works in the repertoire. For students who avoid that kind of music because of their taste or their physical limitations, what are some other challenges that reward our practicing for long sessions on a daily basis?

SM: Any time spent improving our control of the polyphonic elements in great music is really worth the effort. Students seem to respect only Bach's polyphony. Some of them practice separate voices and separate hands but they fail to apply the same approach to Chopin's or Schumann's polyphony.

For those who are careless in that regard, I often play the beginning of the third Chopin Ballade, eliminating the polyphony and just playing the melody with simple chords. Then I ask, "Had Chopin written this piece that way, would he be considered a great composer? Is the melody really beautiful all by itself?" When I then play it as written, the student realizes that the polyphonic writing is what makes the music so compelling.

We often hear performances of Bach's music where the artist is aware of the polyphony and the equal role that both hands play in the interpretation. As the program continues and a romantic piece is performed, suddenly we hear all the attention being given only to the right hand melodies, completely disregarding equally important contrapuntal *motifs* in lower voices that are a significant part of the piece's architecture.

Expressive attention to those voices made Friedman's and Cherkassky's renderings, for example, so magnetic. There is a sense of discovery! One could say that we hear quite a bit of "Bach" in their Chopin. For me, their interpretations are both classical and romantic at the same time.

There was a Cuban composer, Ernesto Lecuona, whose flair for melodic invention had no parallel. Almost all singers include some songs by this composer in their repertoire. I myself own a CD by Placido Domingo dedicated exclusively to Lecuona. Unfortunately, Lecuona did not receive the thorough musical training that would have allowed him to write the very same melodies in a polyphonic context and with motivic development. The Mexican composer Carlos Chávez once commented about Lecuona to Stravinsky, "Can you imagine what you would have done with those melodies?" Stravinsky replied, "If they would have occurred to me!"

By his response, Stravinsky was giving credit to Lecuona melodic imagination. Chávez, on the other hand, was implying Lecuona limitations by suggesting that a second composer was needed to complete the job. Unfortunately, many students approach the practice of the great composers' music as though they were playing Lecuona!

What is missing? The polyphony! Chopin studied, played, and taught all the preludes and fugues of Bach. They were his bible. This shows in his writing. Yet students seldom practice Chopin's polyphony the way they practice Bach's.

KH: *Can you go into more detail about practicing polyphony?*

SM: Practicing separate voices seems beneficial but it has its limitations. I prefer for a student to play two voices at the same time regardless of the hand that plays them. If the work has three voices, practice by playing the top and middle voice, then the top and bottom voice, then the middle and bottom voice before playing them all together. It would be ideal if in each and every case one of the voices was sung rather than played. That is the sure test that you have the music in your ear.

When students play and hear the music harmonically, which is to say vertically, they have lost the sense of polyphony and counterpoint. In the Prelude in B-flat Minor from Book I, we have a clear example of two voices playing in parallel thirds in the right hand. Instead of hearing it as a chord progression or a doubling, I much prefer for the students to practice the right hand part with two hands, stressing the difference between the voices by way of subtle dynamic differentiation. If that approach can then be applied to the right hand alone playing both voices, then I have succeeded in making the student aware of what was taking place in Bach's mind.

The same approach can be used when studying and performing the opening of the Bach Partita No. 2. Now with this acquired skill, it makes sense to ask the student to do the same with a Brahms intermezzo. To sum it all up, there is a bit of Bach in all great music. Use the same approach to analyze and practice everything. It should be understood that at this stage of study, applying the pedal compromises the independence of voices that one is seeking.

KH: *I remember your attention to controlling the buildup of volume in Bach fugues.*

SM: It is a perennial problem. The subject is introduced. When it enters a second, third and each successive time in other voices, the volume is reinforced. Unfortunately, most students are caught up in this pattern with the result being that at the end of the first page we have a climax that is uncalled for when there might be three more pages of fugue writing left. Sometimes students even feel the urge to do a *crescendo* towards each entrance. I much prefer an approach where voices come in and out in constant dialogue, suggesting a civilized conversation rather than a screaming argument.

I experienced this myself as a student at Juilliard, singing in the chorus of the Bach St. Matthew Passion. The conductor, Abraham Kaplan, always asked us to drop down in volume when a new voice was entering. What applies to singing applies to playing the piano!

KH: *I also remember your concern about the balances between voices at the start of most preludes as well as in the dance movements in suites.*

SM: Bach always presents the subject in the right hand and the counter-subject in the left hand. Invariably, after two or four measures, there is a switch with the subject going to

the left hand and the counter-subject going to the right hand. However, that switch is seldom made noticeable to the audience. Most students give more attention to the subject when it starts with the right hand, but fail to continue to give it its importance when it is then played by the left hand. The end result is what I call “right-handed Bach.”

KH: *What do you think would be the reason for this lapse?*

SM: Well, Bach never played Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Chopin, Prokofieff, etc. The students do. What seems like an advantage is just the opposite! All of those composers intended most of their melodies for the right hand with the left hand serving as the accompaniment. It is hard for students to realize that in Baroque music, we are dealing with short subjects being brought in by all the voices sharing equal responsibility. For the past two-and-a-half centuries, music has become more homophonic and less polyphonic. To do justice to Baroque music, a performer has to consciously rethink the habits and attitudes that have dominated music since the time of Bach.

KH: *How do you feel about a no-dynamics approach to the playing of Bach on the piano? The ups and downs that you were referring to would then disappear.*

SM: That is the approach prevalent in the interpretations of such well-known Bach specialists as Glenn Gould, Friedrich Gulda, and Robert Levin. I respect them and we have to thank them for what they have taught us. Glenn Gould is the one who has exerted the most influence on students, as his recordings were the only broad survey of the Bach repertoire for a long time.

From Gould, I appreciate two basic things related to each other: the importance he gave to accompanying material and the sense of counterpoint that he accomplished by making sure that material never disappeared. There can be no counterpoint if one voice is singing and the other one lacks presence. Glenn Gould reminds us that *everything* is important. But, to avoid copying his unique and personal ideas and mannerisms, I encourage my students to make sure that they listen to at least one other version by a different pianist side-by-side with any Gould recording.

Rosalyn Tureck’s approach includes the use of dynamics. I side with her in my teaching, although I can accept a drier performance that lets the notes speak by themselves. In Tureck’s approach there is a frequent use of *tudes do* and *diminuendi*, terracing the dynamic sequence stepwise rather than by gradual continuous change. Although the harpsichord was incapable of the use of any significant dynamics, I cannot imagine Bach making music with all other instruments and the voice, without dynamics. The limitations of the harpsichord in this regard should be taken somewhat into consideration, so that we exercise a degree of restraint, but never to the point of eliminating dynamics altogether.

My former student, Yuan Sheng, is exerting a very positive influence in China through his lectures, performances and articles, including a book jointly written with Phillippe

Charru on the performance of Bach. At the end of his studies with me, I encouraged him to play for Tureck with whom he then studied for an extended length of time.

Another former student of mine that I mentioned earlier, Simone Dinnerstein, is enjoying an international reputation as an interpreter of Bach. As I recall her first experiences performing Bach that I had assigned her when she was a child, she demonstrated even at that early age, a grasp of the independence and freedom that melody can enjoy against its accompaniment. This can be easily ascertained when listening to the *Aria* in her famous recording of the *Goldberg Variations*. The *cantilena* floats in the air!

KH: You once showed me nine different LP sets of the Bach Well-Tempered Clavier in your library. I learned a great deal from hearing your description of each keyboardist's interpretation and the samples you played to illustrate.

SM: Even nine recordings do not begin to do justice to the possibilities of interpretation, particularly when the composer included almost no indications. What is important to keep in mind is what we can learn from particular interpretations. Wanda Landowska was the first harpsichordist to record the entire WTC on that instrument. She obviously did not use the most scholarly or historical approach when deciding to use a Pleyel harpsichord built especially for her and capable of doing many dynamically effective things not possible on Bach's own instrument.

What I learned from her was the benefits to be derived from adding embellishments—in her case, sometimes too many—and the type that would be appropriate. There is an improvisatory quality in some of her preludes that render the music extremely dramatic and expressive. This romantic approach has been highly criticized by fellow harpsichordists and Baroque specialists.

I, for one, dislike the historical terms Baroque, Classic and Romantic when they tend to imply that there was a difference in human nature in each of those periods. Regardless of the period in which Bach lived, to me he was the most “romantic” of all composers. You had to be, in order to have twenty-one children!

I don't wish to extend myself further into the discussion of the recordings of the Well-Tempered Clavier. I do think it is important, though, to listen to Edwin Fischer's set as he was the first pianist to record it. He was ahead of his time.

KH: Since Bach did not have the piano specifically in mind, how centrally important do you consider the Bach repertoire for students? Can we be complete pianists and not study Bach?

SM: There is nothing more revealing to me about the student's musicality, musicianship, level of advancement and technical command than to hear him or her play Bach. I don't like to accept any students who don't play Bach for me.

KH: Your guidelines in listening to Bach are very enlightening. How do you approach some of the other important composers?

SM: A few years ago I was driving a group of my most advanced students through Spain in conjunction with my festivals there. I turned on the radio in the middle of a Chopin Mazurka. I challenged all of my students to guess who the performer might be, and the reasons for their guesses. I no longer recall the end result, but I do remember that many pianists were suggested and a whole discussion took place in both support and rejection of the choices.

Less experienced students would not have been able to participate in the discussion. It takes years of listening to develop the expertise and familiarity needed to identify styles of interpretation and associate them with specific performers. It is one of our roles as teachers to guide our students as they listen to great artists, to make sure that they are aware of what is taking place. Many students listen, but do not hear!

Following the score is important while listening, but sometimes it is important to listen without the score. As a matter of fact, the latter is the way I most often teach. By now I am familiar with the important works in the literature. I prefer to hear the music and the interpretation, without the added distraction of the printed scoring. Let us not forget that composers hear the music in their heads before they put it down on paper. The printing of music on paper is an intermediate step, not the primary source.

I ask, if art students can recognize the difference between a painting by Monet or Utrillo, why shouldn't serious piano students recognize the difference between Rubinstein and Serkin? As a matter of fact, I make a habit of asking every student at an audition or first lesson who his or her favorite pianists are. From their response, I can tell immediately how much work lies ahead. Suppose one student's answer is Horowitz, Rubinstein, and Argerich. Another one answers Myra Hess, Wilhelm Kempff, and Benno Moiseiwitsch. Well, you tell me which answer I prefer!

KH: I know, because I went through the same thing. My knowledge of pianists was limited to a handful who were the most famous and current.

SM: I am frequently amazed, for instance, at the lack of relationship between their preferred artists and whatever composer the student and I are examining. Students tend to think that only the most famous pianists are the best for every composer.

KH: Can you give some examples when this might not be the case?

SM: To give some important examples, let's take Scarlatti: of course Horowitz is to be admired, but one should look into other pianists such as Michelangeli, Maria Tipo, Clara Haskil, Marcelle Meyer and Murray Perahia. For Mozart, there are many well-known pianists who can be very satisfying, but almost no student is familiar the beautiful interpretations of Maria João Pires. The same thing with Beethoven: few are familiar

with the playing of Solomon, Friedrich Gulda, Annie Fischer, and Hans Richter-Haaser. For Schubert, I recommend listening to Clifford Curzon and Bruce Hungerford. For Brahms, Julius Katchen, and so on and so forth.

As you can see, I mentioned so many great artists that are usually totally unfamiliar to the young generation of piano students. There are many others.

KH: *Would you like to mention a few of them?*

SM: What I will do instead is supply a listing that I have assembled of recorded pianists of the past, for an additional appendix following the text of your dissertation. In it, I include the year and country of birth, the year and place of death, principal teachers and any important students plus a concise description with recommended sample listening.

It is our responsibility as teachers to keep the torch of the great tradition of pianists alive into the future. Each of them had such a defined and memorable musical personality. There are a handful of young emerging pianists who seem to be destined to take their places among the greats. However, far too many young pianists seem to be “cut to a mold.”

KH: *Why do you think that they are all so much alike?*

SM: On the one hand, there is an obsession with fidelity to the score, which minimizes the role of the interpreter in the recreation of a musical composition. We teachers spend our lives making sure that our students are faithful to the composer’s markings. But by doing so, if we stop there, we are failing to develop them into artists.

The reason why piano teaching has to be much more, lies in the shortcomings of our system of musical notation. No amount of note-writing and annotation can completely describe the sound of a piece or the effect on the listener that is desired. Those call for artistic empathy with what is believed to have been in the composer’s conception and the imagination to translate it into sound, simultaneously coming to terms with the unique acoustic properties of the instrument in use and the performance venue of the moment. When students and/or teacher believe that the score has shown them everything, the musical result is incomplete, sounds like “student playing,” and fails to do justice to the music.

Of course, fidelity to the score does not imply the elimination of an artistic interpretation. Quite the contrary! Sublime results can be obtained through it if the “interpreter” (pay attention to this word!) can find the meaning behind the notes and markings.

Another negative influence comes from competitions. In order to please most members of the jury and not alienate any of them, both teachers and students prepare the required repertoire by making sure that no interpretive idea is outside of the usual mainstream. The result is a pervasive intentional absence of personality and individuality.

Even though the playing might be very faithful and precise, there is often a monotonous predictability from measure to measure which is just the opposite of what keeps me on the edge of my seat when I attend a concert.

KH: You have adjudicated many competitions. What are your main criteria, and what do you value the most?

SM: I am always looking for a few moments of ecstasy and ultimate beauty. There might be a contestant who plays everything very well, but never elicits that special response. Someone else might be less consistent but shows the potential of artistic achievement in certain specific aspects of the repertoire. The second one will be the more likely to be able to move an audience, and that is the real basis for a performing career and developing a following.

KH: Then do you feel that there is a discrepancy between the qualities required to win a competition and the ones needed to sustain a career?

SM: Competitions in general have not been successful in predicting which artists will achieve long-term success. All one has to do is to refer to Gustav Alink's books that include past winners since the beginning of competitions in the late nineteenth century, to realize that in many cases the first prize winners disappeared and the lesser winners—or those disqualified—went on to have important careers. Some competitions have had an excellent record, such as the Chopin and the Leeds, though these are the exceptions. The Tchaikovsky was important for many years, but later became politicized. I have great respect for the Rubinstein and the Gilmore, both won by my former student Kirill Gerstein.

KH: Why do competitions often fail to select the most artistic competitors as winners?

SM: It takes talent to appreciate talent! When it comes to great artistry, not everyone, including some of the most educated jurors, can really hear it. Open-mindedness among jurors is another requisite. In that respect, sometimes teachers can be more accepting of different points of view than performing artists, who on the other hand, tend to react negatively to hearing an interpretation that differs from their own. The strong opinions that generate a distinctive performance can interfere with open-minded adjudication.

I not only sense it in competitions, but also in master classes. I am full of admiration for those great performing artists who periodically come to offer master classes at MSM. Their ideas are always illuminating. Their knowledge of style and of the mastery of the instrument are inspiring. What they say usually makes sense. Every one of the students performing as well as the audience and the teachers present, myself included, is exposed to real beauty.

There is a problem, though. Often those visiting artists seem to have one answer for every interpretive detail. I imagine a fifteen year-old Rubinstein or Richter being given the same suggestions. With that teaching approach, can we be sure that they would have evolved into the great artists they became? This teaching specificity can make students sound much better, but it can also fail to develop the full potential of those few who have something special and personal to say.

If those great performing artists keep the same specific approach as jurors in evaluating the interpretations heard in a competition, it becomes problematic for the results to be sure to do justice to the most talented. I have experienced this problem a number of times.

KH: If competitions are not the best route for the most unique interpreters, what are their best options?

SM: There does not seem to be one path: exposure and perseverance are needed, and probably some degree of luck. The greatest talents eventually seem to achieve recognition, whether they are winners or not. I remember that during my first or second visit to China, everyone in Beijing wanted me to hear a very special nine-year old boy who unfortunately was out of town. The boy was Lang Lang. That was a case where precocity opened the doors for him from the start.

Rudolf Serkin, on the other hand, built a reputation through his chamber music performances and was not recognized as a soloist until he was almost thirty. Regardless of the level of talent, a good sense of entrepreneurship is always required. Even Lang Lang is involved with all kinds of projects that contribute to making him a household name, even though he no longer really needs them. Others must persevere and find ways to remain visible and available. Staying at home and waiting for the phone to ring will not generate a career.

KH: Do you believe that competing in competitions should shape a student's development?

SM: The idea of going to competitions is to try to find recognition in order to get performance opportunities. Unfortunately, the first goal for any piano student should be to learn as much repertoire as possible and to play it as beautifully as possible. When I give an audition, I always like to ask the students what their goals are and what they wish to accomplish in studying with me. Invariably, the ones who eventually win competitions express a desire for me to teach them to play more artistically. The ones who instead express a desire to win competitions with my help, eventually fail in that pursuit. If the goal is not artistic, there can be no success, nor should there be.

While competitions can be an incentive to the learning of new repertoire, they very often have the opposite effect. Once I heard a young French pianist performing the Liszt Sonata in three or four different competitions over the span of about five years.

Invariably he was one of the top prizewinners, always noticed by the jurors. He eventually settled to begin what appeared to be a promising career. It did not happen. Why? He had no repertoire. He did get credit in Gustav Alink's book on competitions as having entered a total of 59 of them, more than anyone else.

KH: He probably felt that unless he played the Liszt Sonata, he had no chance of winning. Do you disagree with his decision?

SM: This is a problem I confront with my best students all the time. I have to advise them. My advice is based on the fact that I believe that once you have learned the Liszt Sonata to the limits of your abilities at any one given time, you do not need to keep practicing it in order to improve it. Working and working on the same piece can be detrimental. It is a much better idea to work on other major works by various composers in different styles and continue your growth as a musician.

In going back to the Liszt Sonata that has been well-learned, one can become a musical prisoner of one's own playing habits. At that point, it is better to sit down in a chair with the score and go through the music mentally, without any confining habits or prejudices. This strategy could make it possible to review and prepare the Liszt Sonata for two or three competitions, beginning two weeks before each takes place, and spending the other fifty weeks of the year learning something else.

I am sure that when I had the opportunity of hearing subsequent performances of the Liszt Sonata by the young French pianist, I would have welcomed a noticeable growth, with new insights in his interpretation. But, there were none. Studying scores during airplane flights from competition to competition would have given this contestant a great opportunity for musical growth at a high altitude!

KH: What are your reflections upon your own students' successes as contestants?

SM: Interestingly, my two most successful students represent two entirely different pathways to brilliant careers. One, Simone Dinnerstein, achieved an international reputation through the merits of her playing, recognized by audiences and critics without participation in any competitions. The other, Kirill Gerstein, was a winner at a number of competitions, which helped him prepare for the Rubinstein where he won first prize, and led to his receipt of the Gilmore Artist Award and the Avery Fisher Career Grant. After they left MSM, both Simone and Kirill continued their growth with other teachers who contributed significantly to their current artistic success.

I am lucky to have had quite a number of competition winners among my students. In some cases I have been a witness to their success. I can assure you that the greatest pleasure I derived was from hearing them play at their best and to deserve the prizes they won. Whenever a student has met that goal, but has received no prize, I have still felt great pride in their artistic achievement, and I try to console them that they have nevertheless made a positive step forward toward a performing career.

I feel strongly that the best-performing student deserves the first prize. I have no hesitation to state here that on one occasion, one of my students was tied for the first prize and I was given no choice but to break the tie. I voted for the other contestant because he deserved it.

KH: *Do you think that most other jurors share your strong ethical position?*

SM: I would like to believe so, but I have witnessed very disappointing outcomes.

KH: *Are you willing to share an example?*

SM: As long as I do not have to be specific and do not mention any names. I had a student whose previous teacher introduced him to me and decided that I should continue to guide him. I did not know at that time that a teacher born in the same city as the student expected the student to continue his studies with him. Later on, the latter teacher became the artistic director of a competition, to which he invited me to be a juror. Two of my best students participated, including the one the director had wanted to have as his own student.

From the moment I arrived at the competition, there was a juror who could not stop praising my two students and wanted to invite them to perform at an important festival she directed in her country. In one of the rounds, when one of my students was performing the *Fantasia Baetica* by Falla, the artistic director conspicuously placed his hands over his ears as if shocked by what he had just heard, for all the other jurors to see. When I later asked him why he made such an unprofessional display, which could have influenced the voting, he complained about my pupil not being aware that Falla had pointed out to his pupil Ernesto Halffter that there had been a mistake in the printed score. When I mentioned this to my student, he responded by refuting this assertion which my pupil claimed had been clarified by Mr. Halffter in defense of the score, as printed. In other words, my student was more knowledgeable about the facts than the artistic director!

This incident proved that the artistic director was trying to punish my pupil for his misdeed in choosing me as his teacher instead of himself. Yet it seemed as if there was nothing he could do to take away the first two prizes from my two students who were by far the best, by jury consensus. There was only one thing he could do, which was to declare that none of the contestants deserved the first prize. By doing so, he was reducing their prizes by €10,000 each.

How did he achieve it? By threatening six of the thirteen jurors that they would not be invited again if any of them voted in favor of a first prize. It was an open vote, the last juror being the one who had praised my students all along. I couldn't believe she could be so hypocritical. Fate made it possible for me to listen to her explanation three months later when we were both jurors at another competition in Sofia, Bulgaria. She was very

embarrassed, but confessed that her friendship with the artistic director went back to their student days in Paris and she did not want to lose that friendship because of her vote.

KH: I think you have said enough to convince all your students never to enter a competition!

SM: That is not my intention. I think it is very important for students to be alert. Even though they cannot control the outcome, a disappointing one is not necessarily a reflection on the quality of their work or their talent. There are other forces in play, as there always are in life, and we do the best we can.

To be fair to this subject would require an additional dissertation. A lot of the corruption results from favors exchanged among artistic directors seeking visibility and paid pleasure trips. In one competition there were three prizewinners, but on the night of the award ceremony a fourth winner showed up out of nowhere. He was the son of the artistic director of another competition, who happened to be in attendance. His son had participated but had not made it to the finals. Nevertheless, he was given a newly created prize just to ingratiate the host director with the important visitor.

Be aware that all my stories pertain to long established competitions in high standing that are members of the *Fédération Mondiale de Concours Internationaux de Musique*, based in Switzerland. I would not have accepted their invitations otherwise. What I have always tried to do is to influence the voting system, avoiding a numerical scale that can make a single juror have a greater influence on the outcome than he or she is entitled to.

In the second year of the Artur Rubinstein Competition in Israel, the administrators managed to convince Rubinstein himself to join with them and sit on their jury. They explained to him their point system, a sliding scale from 1 to 20 in each of the judging categories. When he handed in his score cards, everything was either 1 or 20, nothing in between. They went back to him, thinking he did not understand the sliding scale, and he replied, "No, no! At this level of proficiency, either they have it, or they don't!"

Also keep in mind that compared to a concert, a competition is an artificial thing. Rubinstein was right. The idea of giving points, more or less, to the most gifted young talents in the world, is in itself meaningless and irrelevant. This could only have been proven once and for all if, in the history of piano competitions, there had been an opportunity for Backhaus, Kempff, Lhévinne, Hofmann, Rachmaninoff, Moiseiwitsch, Friedman, Horowitz, and Rubinstein to compete with each other at a time when they were all in their prime. If you had been a juror in such a competition, who among those immortals would you declare a loser?

KH: In the absence of a prize, can you mention other incentives for participation?

SM: I always encourage my students to listen to other contestants instead of just spending all their time practicing. The preparation must take place before they arrive at the

competition. They should also hear whatever suggestions or comments they can get from the jurors. These jurors have an advantage over me, they can hear my students objectively. I, on the other hand, always know what to expect.

In that regard, I can be surprised by my own students' interpretations under the pressure of the competition. They tend to do unexpected things that I as a teacher would never have had to confront in the narrow confines of my studio. That is one reason why I gifted the small recital hall to MSM, so that we members of the performing faculty could have an added space to hear our students as they prepare for important concerts and competitions, with the presence of an audience—fellow students—and in a larger, more formal setting than a studio.

KH: You are well-known as a competition juror. Do you enjoy the experience?

SM: I welcome the opportunity to travel to places where I have never been before. I am treated royally, I stay in luxurious hotels, eat good food, meet new colleagues, exchange ideas, and listen to many different interpretations of the same repertoire. That often provides pleasant surprises. It is an elevating experience.

KH: I know what your values are as you try to select the winners among contestants. Do you think that other veteran jurors have different points of view?

SM: In general, it depends on their training as well as the country that they come from. Students must take this into consideration when deciding which competitions to enter. I always request the names of the jurors when they have been provided beforehand. I know many of those jurors and have become familiar with their likes and dislikes. I can often help my students select the competitions where their particular strengths will be best recognized.

Some of my experience in this regard comes from my master classes in the various countries where these jurors have been trained and currently reside. I have a sense of the tastes and values in Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Denmark, and Russia (St. Petersburg and Moscow are quite different). In some cases, historical influences permeate the criteria. In the biographical portion I surveyed my master classes in Eastern Europe. As I mentioned then, in the case of the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, Viennese influence is still felt as a result of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Chopin Academy in Warsaw has become much more conservative in its musical outlook, which augurs badly for the future artistic standards of the Chopin Competition. Bulgaria still looks towards Moscow, where most of its young pianists wish to study. Although there certainly are exceptions, future contestants can benefit by being aware of these differences.

KH: Can you sum up your advice to students entering competitions?

SM: Imagine that you are performing in a concert, not in a competition. Be true to yourself. Play exactly the way you think the music should be played and how you enjoy playing it. Don't try to figure out what the judges like or dislike. Don't hesitate to show your personality, being afraid that a juror might be turned off. We jurors recognize playing that is truthful and sincere.

Many years ago Alexandre Moutouzkine participated in the Iturbi competition in Valencia, Spain, performing the Prelude and Fugue in c# minor (Book II) in the first round.. Three of the jurors considered the interpretation of the Fugue totally inappropriate (too fast and with finger staccato) and they told me so. However, they admired it so much that they concluded at that early stage that he was eventually going to be the first prize winner. He was! In any case, they were moved by the sincerity of his conception and the mastery of his execution.

The opposite occurred when a student in a major international competition altered his interpretation of a concerto because of his perception that it would please a particular member of the jury. He later learned he was awarded a lesser prize than originally intended because the jurors did not experience a convincing performance.

These two examples illustrate perfectly that there is only one way: play with your heart! I for one, never get carried away with my students' performances, no matter how good. I feel that my students respect me and my opinion because, in the midst of a thunderous applause and critical praise, I can still point out what could have been improved. It does not mean that I did not enjoy the performance, it only means that we as teachers must be able to superimpose, over something of great quality, an even higher ideal.

KH: Is the input and commentary from jurors in school an important part of our learning process? Juries are required of us. My question should probably also apply to master classes and auditions.

SM: If taken with a grain of salt. I've already stressed that any student who plays for ten different teachers will be given ten different suggestions for improvement. Every one of those suggestions can be very valuable. The problem lies in the most appropriate sequencing of solutions. How does a teacher decide which is the first problem to solve? Or, which one is the basic one that leads to a second step and the second to a third step? That is crucial! You can have a teacher who works on something that is very important, but he or she can't completely resolve it because he or she has not addressed something else which is prerequisite. It is the order assigned to the problems and in dealing with them that makes the biggest difference in the end result.

KH: Do you think that students are more concerned than they should be about being judged by each other? Sometimes students seem to be more critical than judges in a competition or critics from a newspaper.

SM: Among adolescents and young adults, it is natural human instinct to respond to peer pressure. One always wants to be held in good esteem, but criticism from fellow students should be taken with a sense of proportion, never minimizing the value of your own preparation and contribution. You really know as much as they do and should have confidence about that.

You also need to know the student-critic's values. Students sometimes equate the playing of large works with a higher level of achievement. A great *Papillons* should denote a higher artistic accomplishment than a poor performance of the Rachmaninoff *Third Piano Concerto*. Therefore, I suggest that you choose your listeners with almost as much care as you would choose a teacher.

KH: *What are your concluding thoughts about master classes? Do you have reservations?*

SM: It would be so enlightening if we could all experience, observe, and listen to lessons given by master teachers throughout the history of piano teaching. Teachers tend to teach differently in a public situation than in a private lesson. I know that my best lessons are private. I don't like anyone listening or observing, even if I do it frequently myself in master classes.

I am too conscious of the audience's expectation of being entertained. I am also frustrated when students bring in repertoire for which they are not ready. Then I have to make sure that the music flows, even though the student might need some detailed work that requires stopping and repeating. The student's confidence also has to be taken into consideration as well as the ego of the teacher, who may be sitting in the audience.

An embarrassing situation which unfortunately happens too often is to have to teach a piece that is beyond the student's current level. And that is the main difference between teaching the pieces we select for our own students' private lessons or teaching pieces prescribed by other teachers who might or might not know what they are doing.

What about fingering? Am I going to change some of it in the midst of a master class? The student would have to practice it at home before demonstrating the results to the audience.

I, for one, never like to teach just one piece in a master class. I like to hear a student play portions of two or three pieces because there is no way to know what a student needs just by listening to one piece. Even so, we can't really get to know the student in so short a time.

I think in many ways, master classes are an artificial way of teaching. Week-to-week private lessons are the true pathway for a student's development. Master classes have become a way of life just like competitions, and students often go from one to the other. They become easily confused hearing many different opinions while not maintaining a

basic, central idea as to what they need. I recommend that every student find one teacher that is the best for him or her at that particular moment, and study for a prolonged period of time instead of constantly changing direction.

KH: I can remember you're having strong opinions about some of the editions your students had purchased. Can we now come back to this subject, which we briefly touched on earlier?

SM: One area that I feel the students need to learn much more about is the important role of editors in the publication of piano literature. For example, sometimes a student says, "Do you think I should buy the Dover edition of such-and-such a work?" The fact is that we must learn to discern between the publishing houses. Some will engage an editor for the creation of a new version which will be the result of that editor's research and knowledge of the music and the composer. We distinguish that from the product of the publishing house which simply reproduces older editions, which have gone to the public domain and are legally reprintable.

I wish my students would know not only about the great artists and performers but also know the names of editors. For example, Peters Edition publishes many of the works of Liszt, edited by Emil von Sauer, with Sauer's insights as a pupil of Liszt. Because of that, the edition was used for many years until newly researched editions came from Budapest.

We know, for example, that the Paderewski edition of Chopin was not undertaken by Paderewski himself. It is the product of a committee of three Polish scholars. The Kalmus edition of Bach was originally produced by the German publisher Steingraber Verlag, and the great Bach scholar Hans Bischoff collected, from libraries all over Europe, information from many manuscripts from Bach's time, of which only a small percentage were in Bach's own handwriting. Many of the editions of Bach were prepared from copies made by his wife, sons and students.

KH: When we speak about editors, some students are confused because they have Urtext editions and think that Urtext means unedited, but we realize that an Urtext version could not have been published without an editor to prepare it.

SM: There is a need to know what is involved in a good edition and what are the responsibilities. Students are always so proud to say that they learned something from an Urtext edition, but even Urtext editions differ from one another. "Urtext" literally means "original text," which can be from the composer manuscript, or the first printed edition with or without its engraving errors. The word itself is ambiguous and overused, like the word "organic" in the supermarket.

One has to consider what is involved when a publishing company tells a German scholar, "I want you to make a new edition of Beethoven Sonatas," and that this edition, no matter

how scholarly, will have differences from an edition made by someone else who had been hired by a separate publishing house. Why are there discrepancies?

In the first place, to publish an edition of Beethoven Sonatas requires someone who has spent a lifetime studying Beethoven, who necessarily speaks German, and who ideally is German himself; and who has not only looked at and analyzed manuscripts that are notoriously difficult to read and interpret but has also looked at the original first and second editions, letters that were written by Beethoven complaining to the publishers of mistakes in the first edition; and has researched the possibility that a publisher might have changed something in order to conform to the harmonic conventions of the day with an eye toward popularity among performers and audiences. Music publishers after all were, and are, businessmen whose interest in publishing music is to sell it.

Beethoven was also a little bit of a swindler. Knowing in those days that it would take years for publishers in different countries to learn of each others' activity, he would take the same new compositions to publishers in Germany, France, and England, promising each one exclusive worldwide distribution. As a result three different editions would appear, each one claiming the sobriquet "first edition." Not only would each of these "first editions" have unique engraving errors, but in the absence of photocopiers Beethoven's three original hand-copied manuscripts—in his famously terrible handwriting—could easily have generated different engraving results. These are some of the things that give scholars and collectors indigestion.

KH: When a Chopin work appears with variances in the notes in different editions, how do we know which is the correct one?

SM: We know that Chopin was a great improviser and that every time he sat down at the piano he was incapable of playing anything the same way twice. Byron Janis released a valuable publication of a Chopin Waltz which appears in three different manuscript versions by Chopin himself. He also recounts the story of Chopin playing a Mazurka as an encore, getting so much applause that he decided to play it again, this time completely different!

Why is that? I believe it is because Chopin relished his improvisatory skills when composing. His creativity inspired him all the time towards new and different ideas. He had a different attitude from Beethoven. Beethoven went over and over everything and spent a long time seeking perfection. He was aware of posterity. He knew that his music would endure, so he made sure that everybody knew exactly what he wanted. He was very specific in his dynamics, in his tempi, in every detail.

I suspect Chopin wrote music for his own concerts to express his talent and for the benefit of his pupils. He sometimes adapted pieces to different levels of difficulty. So did Mozart, who sometimes wrote easier concerti for royalty who didn't play the piano so well, on commission. All these things are required to be known by students. They are not essential knowledge, but are part of musical culture, and will help you to understand

why your question has to be answered by “best choice” rather than “correct edition.”

KH: *Why do there seem to be more differences between older and newer editions with Bach than with most other composers?*

SM: When I was a student, I was raised playing Bach in the Kalmus edition and the editor was Hans Bischoff. The printing was small, but large enough to be able to read it. There were some tempo indications that were not by Bach. That alone bars the use of the word *Urtext* with that edition. But the marvelous thing about it was that since there were many places where the details varied according to different manuscript sources, Bischoff himself chose what would appear in the score as the *preferred* version, but indicated below, on the same page, the other options.

As a teacher, I recommend the Henle edition because it is more *Urtext*, and contains solid fingering suggestions. I have found some discrepancies which bother me a bit because the sound is different from what I was used to. I don't know who is right or wrong, but in a sense I don't think that is so important— we are talking about very trifling changes. What pleases me is to know that a student looking at a page can see only what we believe was written by Bach.

I sometimes have problems with students who come from Russia where the (Breitkopf) Mugellini edition is popular, for it is highly edited: full of slurs, dynamic and metronome markings decidedly *not* by Bach, all of which cause students to be influenced in their interpretation. The metronome was invented a good sixty-five years (patented 1816) after Bach's death. Even if the student declares that he or she pays no attention to these annotations, it is impossible not to be influenced by them. I keep a reference copy, however, because the fingering can be very useful sometimes.

I encourage my pupils to learn from an *Urtext* edition but to also consult other editions in order, for example, to compare fingerings or other suggestions. As I have mentioned earlier, I once consulted five different editions of a Chopin prelude because each had a superior fingering solution for this or that specific measure. It was an enlightening experience and underscores the value of an open mind on the whole subject.

As far as Bach is concerned, none of this means that I have no respect for the various older editions. Czerny, pupil of Beethoven, was, I believe, the first to publish the preludes and fugues by Bach. His contribution was enormous. Czerny states in the preface to his edition that he was presenting the Bach preludes and fugues, to the best of his recollection, exactly the way they were taught to him by Beethoven, who had committed all 48 pairs to memory. Czerny made it possible for students in that century to learn the Well-Tempered Clavier.

Today of course we have a more scholarly approach. We acknowledge Czerny's contribution but do not generally follow his editing, which is an old-fashioned approach

to phrasing, interpretation, and even the correctness of accidentals.

KH: *Without knowing the background of “Urtext,” I had always noticed that the Urtext editions provided the most space on the page to pencil in your teaching comments and instructions, and the fewest wrong fingerings to cross out.*

SM: Modern editions, like Henle, Bärenreiter, and Paderewski, are beautifully engraved and designed for optical ease, probably with the help of the computer. Their intent is to allow the eye to move across the page at a constant rate, and they do allow ample room for student or teacher markings. In Bach, the Urtext edition is the one that gives us the best opportunity to select what kind of approach we will take in articulation, tempi, dynamics, etc.

When it comes to Chopin, I am still partial to the Paderewski. To me, an Urtext edition of Chopin is a contradiction. There is no such thing. The editions most often used are those by Joseffy, Mikuli (Chopin’s student), and Schölz, and these all differ because none of them would have heard Chopin play any piece exactly the same way. Even if we found exactly what Chopin had written down for the last time, I am sure he would still have continued to change the way he would play it over the years. There is no last word on the subject because Chopin himself never uttered one.

What I find in the Paderewski is the best combination of the sources and the traditions established by the pianists who played this music, as well as common sense. I like the fingering. I trust the Polish scholars who did their job as to finding and gathering as much information about Chopin’s manuscripts and publications as needed to produce a final version.

I know Poland recently published a very expensive edition done by Polish scholar Jan Ekier, very respected in his country, but I honestly don’t ask my students to get the Ekier edition because it is too expensive. I don’t think there is a need to spend so much money on a so-called “Urtext Edition” of Chopin.

If I knew, for example, that a publishing house would make a new edition of Beethoven sonatas that would incorporate new-found manuscripts that were never seen before, that would be a different story. But going over the same old texts and trying to make a new edition out of them has more commercial value than scholarly.

Also bear in mind that “Urtext” is a German word. There are whole countries, especially France—which was invaded by Germany three times—where as a matter of national pride they will not print a German word like “Urtext” on the covers of any of their music. The authentic, original edition of most Debussy is *Edition Durand et Fils*. Durand doesn’t feel the need to make representations on their front covers, their attitude, perhaps a little bit arrogant, being always that if you don’t know who they are, and especially if you aren’t French, why should they care?

Finally, there are editions that fulfill all the requirements of a good Urtext edition, but were prepared just before the word Urtext became fashionable, like the Broder edition of Mozart sonatas and the Ratz edition of Schubert sonatas. Those bear the names of the respected musicologists who did the research and preparation, and are really much more “Urtext” than Kalmus Urtext editions that simply reprint early publications with all their errors.

So with regard to editions, I would like my students to know who the editors are, and what they personally and professionally bring to the music. For example, it is not the Henle imprint that is important in establishing “Urtext” for Haydn piano sonatas; I look for the name Landon. H. C. Robbins Landon was the great Haydn scholar who, with his wife Christa Landon, uncovered the existence of all the additional sonatas after the 48 we all used to know, and who spent most of their lives clarifying and authenticating Haydn manuscripts.

KH: With the more recent composers, who were still alive when their music was published, doesn't the original edition take on more authenticity?

SM: When we know that the composer was available to double check the publications of his own compositions, that certainly makes the original edition fundamental as a primary source. When there is an editor, we like to know his background and the reason he or she was given the responsibility. I always feel that it is very important for the editor to be raised in the same country as the composer. There is something about understanding your own *ethnos*, and speaking the language fluently so that you can read every article ever written on the subject. It might be wrong-headed of me, but to ask a German editor, no matter how scholarly, even if he reads French fluently, to prepare an edition of French music, I would in principle deem it less credible than an edition prepared by a French editor. Most publishers seem to proceed with that logic. There are, of course, exceptions—Landon, the eminent Haydn expert I just mentioned, was English and not Austrian, but he attained a high position of authority on his subject.

For example, Debussy's music is now in the public domain. We used to buy Debussy Preludes—expensively!—from Durand, who first published them. Now Henle, Peters, and many other publishing houses print the works of Debussy. But if you put a Durand edition beside one of the newer ones, you see immediately by its appearance whether you have an exact photo facsimile of the original Durand or a new engraving that may contain discrepancies. In the latter case, you are obliged to inspect it carefully, determine the rationale for the new version, and arrive at an informed decision.

KH: I would imagine that the same applies to editions involving dance forms, where both choreographic and musical elements are working together.

SM: Absolutely! A native musician has always an edge in the understanding of his or her country's music, especially dance. This is the rationale I use in advising my doctoral candidates when confronted with a choice of subject for their doctoral dissertation. I

always suggest that they go back to their countries and explore any area in which they can make a contribution.

One of my former doctoral candidates, Inesa Synkevich, comes from Ukraine. So many great pianists were born and had their early training there. Let me mention just a few: Simon Barere, Felix Blumenfeld, Alexander Brailowsky, Shura Cherkassky, Vladimir de Pachmann, Emil Gilels, Sascha Gorodnitzki (my teacher), Vladimir Horowitz, Benno Moiseiwitsch, Heinrich Neuhaus, Sviatoslav Richter, Eduard Steuermann . . .

KH: *What a list!*

SM: Because Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, many of those pianists were considered to have been Russian. It is true that many of them completed their studies in either St. Petersburg or Moscow. I recommended to Inesa, a wonderful pianist and teacher in her own right, that she go back to her home country and research the teaching tradition in the major cities, particularly Kiev and Odessa, which produced such noteworthy results. She decided to concentrate on Felix Blumenfeld, teacher of Horowitz and Neuhaus, the latter in turn becoming the teacher of Gilels and Richter. In following through, she made a major contribution.

This reinforces my point of view that an ethnic relation to a specific country, its composers and its performers, provides an edge when selecting editors, teachers and interpreters.

KH: *Is that why you always asked us to make a list of the editors in our personal libraries, and to keep track of the names of performers we had heard, either live or through recordings?*

SM: I want my students to be familiar with the background of all artists whom they encounter in their studies and in their professional lives. There is a close relationship between an interpretation and the nationality, ethnic and educational background of the performer. Obviously, if Shura Cherkassky or Horowitz had been born in another country and had been educated in another tradition, the result would have been different. We have to consider all the elements that fate brings together, that result in the evolution of a unique performer.

KH: *Are these things that you keep in mind as you teach the different composers to students?*

SM: I wish I could emulate the intellectual depth of great German pedagogues, the elegant and poetic charm of the Viennese school, the seductive imagery of the French school, and the lyrical magnetism of the Romantics, to always embody every quality inherent in the music I teach. Will I ever achieve it? I have no time left, and I can only aspire to accomplish what is within my grasp.

KH: That statement underscores your modesty and your sense of responsibility. Do you have role models of your own among the great teachers of the past?

SM: I have, but although I have read quite a bit about their lives and teaching styles, I still follow my own intuition with my students. It is regrettable that the world is familiar only with the performers those teachers produced, but not the teachers themselves.

KH: For the benefit of readers of this dissertation, could you name some of those teachers you feel deserve credit for their work?

SM: I refer the readers to Appendix 3, “Pianists and Teachers of the Past.” It pains me to imagine how many other great teachers I have omitted. I can think of no worthier assignment to my students than to ask them to read about each of these teachers and to list the students they produced.

KH: Among those that I recognize, very few seem to have had performing careers.

SM: I am sure that each and every one of them was a great pianist. Otherwise, they could not have taught so many great artists. I do believe, though, that piano teaching at an artistic level requires a full-time commitment. Life’s circumstances and personal choices surely had an impact on their decisions to dedicate all their time and resources to the art of teaching.

KH: It has been wonderful to explore in depth the great pianistic traditions. Now if I may, I’d like to return to some of the more everyday aspects of your teaching. Singers and most instrumentalists create their pitches without a graphic keyboard reference. Since we pianists have a visual advantage, is there any benefit for us to have perfect pitch?

SM: To me, perfect pitch is one of the signs of musical talent. It has made it possible for me to visualize the notes on a piano that I hear in my head when listening to an orchestra or any instrumental combination, and to remember music in some detail after hearing it performed once.. In my childhood, I could accompany any or familiar aria. It could not only single pitches, but also a cluster of pitches forming a dissonant chord. I think that perfect pitch makes it easier and faster for pianists to learn and remember repertoire.

However, it can sometimes be an obstacle. I once played a joke on my former student Youngho Kim. He had to play a concert in a beautiful church in Northern Spain. He had his wife with him and we had to drive to the place. Since he has perfect pitch, I decided to tease him. I knew the venue, and that the piano would be decent, but I let him believe that he was going to play on an upright piano, a half-step out-of-tune. Since he was going to play the Pathétique Sonata to start the program, I asked him, “Will you find it disturbing to play a C minor chord and hear it as C-sharp minor? Would it throw you off?” Of course it would have thrown him off, just as it would have me. But of course he arrived to find a beautiful, perfectly tuned grand piano and we had a happy ending.

The fact is that good relative pitch is what is most generally useful. My earlier references to an intervallic approach to reading takes this very much into consideration. After we hear an initial tone, it is most important to be able to ascertain all the pitches that follow in terms of their intervallic relationships, and just as important to retain a clear memory of that initial reference tone.

KH: You often refer to pianists of the past as having different approaches to interpretation: score-oriented, poetic, romantic, intellectual, creative are some of the descriptions I have heard you use. Do you perceive similar differences among your students?

SM: One has to keep in mind that most great artists represent a mixture of “schools.” Listen to Horowitz playing Schumann and there can be no doubt that he is a romantic pianist. Listen to him play Scarlatti and you sense a much more classical approach. When I listen to my advanced students, I immediately take note of which ones reproduce the text as accurately as possible, and which ones tend to incorporate personal touches. It is my duty to make sure that those in the first group develop enough imagination to make their playing more personal. It is also my duty to make sure that those in the second group develop enough discipline to express themselves with fidelity and without distortion. The complete artist will demonstrate a balance of both approaches.

KH: Can you cite a well-known pianist for each approach?

SM: The best way to make my point is to ask you to listen to and compare the mazurka section of the Chopin *Andante Spianato*, as recorded by both Alfred Brendel and Vladimir Horowitz. Brendel, I imagine, from his playing and from his writings, would like to carry out Chopin’s precise intentions as reflected in the score, above all. Horowitz, on the other hand, is looking at the same score and imagining all the pianistic and acoustic effects at his disposal that will seduce the audience and thrill them with the beauty of the performance.

Let us wonder how it would have turned out if Brendel had studied with Josef Hoffman, and Horowitz with Edwin Fischer. Doesn’t this possible nightmare scenario underscore the great responsibility that teachers have in guiding such great talents, allowing them to grow naturally without superimposing the teacher’s tastes and prejudices? We teachers must be like sponges, ready to accept everything and anything. Open-mindedness is the key!

KH: Your teaching philosophy has prompted you to guide your students’ learning process all the way to the concert stage. Many of us had the opportunity to participate in your international piano festivals, both as concerto soloists and in solo recital in your presence. Your comments were particularly helpful at those initial and crucial moments of our professional engagement. They went beyond anything we could learn from a

private lesson and will be indelibly retained.

SM: This is an important aspect of my teaching, which I don't mind talking about again. It would be wonderful if all teachers could have at their disposal two fine symphony orchestras, an excellent conductor and the opportunity to hear their students in more than six concert halls (some as impressive as Lincoln Center) with different pianos and acoustical conditions. What a teaching paradise!

Besides all the musical and technical issues that would be reviewed after a performance, it gave me the opportunity to comment on each student's stage deportment and their abilities to engage and sustain the interest of audiences. The pressure on each of you was enormous. Under the terms of the sponsorship provided to us, each festival had to continually demonstrate its artistic merit or face an uncertain future. Happily, what started in Tenerife expanded to additional cities and venues, and went on for many years. The artistic accomplishment was beyond our expectations! For that I am grateful to you and to every student that contributed to our success.

KH: You have just mentioned engaging and sustaining the interest of audiences. I recall how often you have pointed out how to correct the things we do that interfere with that result.

SM: When we listen to great artists, we must learn to understand their innate ability to communicate with an audience. I could enumerate many tricks of the trade, such as getting louder when playing softly for too long, doing the opposite when called for, sensing the right character and tempo, balancing freedom with structure, using silence as a dramatic tool, and many other devices that fit specifically with each genre. Those who have great talent for public performance do learn to sense these things early on. It is my duty to compare my students' performances with the most artistic imaginable, in order for them to realize why they might succeed or might fail.

The term "tricks" should not give the impression of superficiality or lack of sincerity. Great artists use them all the time but are not aware of them. They follow their instincts! In many ways, our role as teachers is to shape our students' instincts so that they can rely on them while projecting sincerity and reverence to the music being performed.

KH: How do you go about introducing the musical identities of the major composers to your students?

SM: It would be ideal if we could teach pieces in every style and period without having to reveal the names of the composers, but let the music itself tell us what it is all about. Students already come with preconceived ideas. Sometimes we need just a few words to define a composer's persona. If I think about Bach, I think foremost about polyphony and his twenty-one children. If I think of Mozart, I share with him his love for Italian opera. For Beethoven, I think about big structures and orchestration. For Schubert, I consider his affinity for the voice and his inspiration for melody. For Chopin, I imagine

the fusion of Bach, Mozart, and Bellini into a poetic whole that develops the beauty of the piano's unique sonorities. For Schumann, I must take into consideration his passionate albeit neurotic personality with surprising shifts of character and mood. With Debussy, I am reminded of my experience listening to a Gamelan orchestra upon arrival at my hotel in Djakarta. With Ravel, I am reminded of the French Baroque composers and of the beautiful Villa d'Este near Rome which inspired both Ravel and Liszt to reproduce the sounds of a water fountain. With Prokofieff, I imagine a talented and rebellious composer who, while stifled by a misguided political leader, nevertheless gave voice to the Russian soul and suffering. I could go on but the emphasis here has to be on the creation of an image to which students can relate, as they explore the thinking and character of each composer.

KH: Going back to classical composers like Mozart and Beethoven: Do you often feel the need to emphasize steadiness of tempo?

SM: We teachers spend a lifetime tapping and clapping to make sure that students keep their tempi, particularly in their interpretation of classical music. How often do we find that a theme in the exposition of a piano sonata is played faster or slower than the same theme in another key appearing in the development section? How often do we find that a student has slowed down in a connecting passage because it is mainly for the left hand and there are unresolved fingering and technical problems? How often do we find that a student is playing too fast because he or she has not realized that quarter notes will later break into sixteenth notes?

If at the end of all that tapping and clapping until our hands are red we do accomplish the immediate task of making sure that they play steadily, all we have done is to teach them to play like students, not like artists. There is the art of playing steadily and freely at the same time. Ivo Pogorelich gave me a lesson in one of his early Carnegie Hall concerts where he played a Mozart Sonata in which, while keeping the sense of constant pulse required by the classical genre, the sonata somehow "breathed" at all the appropriate points, including thematic and harmonic changes and cadences.

This clearly shows that we teachers must instill a striving for perfection until the pupil is ready for artistry, and only then to reveal that doing the opposite is even better.

KH: That is very interesting. Can you give us other examples where you teach a student to do something one way, then ask him or her to do the opposite?

SM: Let's picture a student bringing in the Prelude in F Major from Book II of the WTC for the first time. To make sure that the fingers sense distinctly which notes are to be held and which ones are not, I ask the student to play with clear articulation. As soon as the polyphony has been mastered, I want the touch to be the opposite: close to the keys and as legato as possible. If the student is playing a Chopin Nocturne, like the one in B Major, I want to make sure that the fingering is respectful of the polyphony as if it had been written by Bach. However, contrary to my approach to Bach, I will then ask the

student to sacrifice the finger legato in some places in order to concentrate on the most beautiful sound possible, requiring a free-floating hand and wrist in order to also differentiate each voice. The pedal must then help with the aural connections that the fingers are not supplying, in a manner consistent with the sonority that is required throughout.

KH: Wouldn't it have been more practical to have learned the Chopin Nocturne with the fingering that would eventually be used?

SM: That approach with a not too experienced student would lead to sloppiness and amateurishness. It would imply learning a piece with the pedal from the start, as the pedal is needed in order to ascertain where it can substitute for legato fingering and where it cannot. I much prefer to do things "right" first, before doing them "wrong." We must always be in command of our fingering and understand throughout the learning process the decisions that we make, one way or another.

KH: You mentioned Schumann's neurosis, as reflected in his piano music. How can we performers have any sense as to whether or not we have carried out his intentions?

SM: Let's not carry Schumann's neurosis too far. I will venture to say that his music was perhaps the sanest thing about him. I remember an American pianist living in Taiwan, playing for me the Schumann *Carnaval*, and then asking me at the end whether I thought Schumann would have been pleased. My answer will be as shocking to my readers as it was to him: I said, "Why do you care?" For me, a great piece of music, like every great work of art, has a life of its own. The music no longer needs the composer; it needs the performer to imbue it with life!

We all know about Rachmaninoff's admiring reaction in hearing Horowitz play his third concerto in the Steinway basement, accompanied by Rachmaninoff himself after the two had met fortuitously. Listening to each pianist's recording of the piece, you can hear how different their conceptions were. No wonder Rachmaninoff had this answer to the many pianists who asked him how to interpret his C-sharp minor prelude: "Play it any way you like!"

I am aware of a number of other examples, as in the case of a friend of mine, pianist Jean-Paul Sevilla, who played Dutilleux's Piano Sonata for the composer, who praised him, as did the composer's wife, Geneviève Joy, who had previously recorded the piece, even though Sevilla's interpretation was contrary to the composer's original conception.

KH: Have you witnessed a similar circumstance, with any of your students performing a piece with its composer in the audience?

SM: My former student and current teaching associate, Alexander Moutouzkin, participated in a competition in Havana where I was invited as a juror, and where every one of the twenty contestants had to perform a fiendishly difficult étude by Juan Piñera,

a prominent Cuban composer. All the judges were looking at the score as each performance was rendered.

When a decision had to be made as to which performance deserved the special prize (I was not allowed to vote), there was no consensus and every juror voted for a different performer. Alex's name did not come up, except to point out that he had done things that were not in the score and he was therefore not in consideration.

In order to resolve the indecision, one of the jurors suggested that the composer himself should decide and the jurors should all abide by his decision. Piñera immediately selected Alex. As he explained, it was "because when Alex played it, I discovered things in my music which I had never heard—I didn't even know that they were there!"

What does that tell us? Creativity in interpretation plays a huge role! We cannot be slaves of the score alone. The score is only the blueprint. We have multiple recorded examples of composers playing their own pieces, where their creativity takes them well past their original intentions. While I accept their right to recompose their music as they wish, these examples should be an enticement to expand our own imaginations rather than for it to be restricted by paperwork that might no longer reflect the composer's final intentions.

There is nothing in music I dislike more than predictability. When a pianist does things that are absolutely beautiful but may not coincide exactly with the score, that is what makes me want to go to a concert.

KH: As I think back over your many comments following auditions, juries, performances over the years, I sense a greater emphasis on correcting what could be better rather than praising what was good. How do you decide upon the most constructive balance?

SM: I think it is important to be encouraging to good effort and serious preparation. Yet it is counter-productive when we teachers compliment without reason. I think that students learn to respect a teacher most, knowing that he or she is not going to mislead and say that something is good when it is not. I am capable of tears when a student's playing has touched me deeply, and this has happened a number of times. However, I do realize that I am always eager to criticize and suggest improvement, and the balance is therefore tilted towards what may sound "negative." Very often, during the intermission of a recital, I may go backstage. Instead of encouraging, I might spell out all the wrong things I have heard, hoping that there is still time to make some corrections.

The most important thing is to know your student. Some students are all business, and take criticism very well without having feelings about it. Others have a thin skin and take everything personally, and a teacher then needs to exercise some restraint. Choosing one's words carefully is always good advice.

When I was a student at Juilliard, a pupil of Rosina Lhévinne who had won the Chopin competition was rehearsing with the orchestra. Afterward, Mme. Lhévinne was

screaming at him and taking him apart. I was young and thought, “How can he play tonight after what she has done to him?” But you know, I am capable of doing the same thing! The obsession with perfection and beauty can lead us to being almost inhuman in the way we berate our students. We sometimes wonder if we have not gone too far, and try to compensate for it. I will even make a note in my schedule book to be nice for the next lesson.

KH: As I was growing up, I often played for audiences, but other than the preparation of the music and dressing appropriately, no one ever taught me what to do once I was on stage. You are my only teacher to have talked about this in depth, and I know you coach all of your students in the manners and the nuances of public performance. Going further than just behavior, you develop in us an awareness of where we are at the time and how we are being perceived!

SM: Just like there is talent for music, I also believe in the innate talent for public performance. I wish I didn't have to spend any time out of my lessons to coach my students in this regard. Somehow, since I was a child, I always paid attention to many things that preceded an actual performance, as well as the artist's handling of the applause.

What did I notice? First of all, there is the timing between the moment that the lights went off and the appearance of the artist on stage. Many of my students fail to realize that audience members may be engaged in conversation. When the lights go off, those conversations might not stop immediately. A few seconds are needed for the audience to finally become aware that a program is about to begin. When there is finally a sense of expectation, that is when the artist should come on to the stage.

Another thing I used to notice was the relationship between the length of the space between offstage and the location of the instrument, the speed of walking and the size of the audience. When great artists play in Carnegie Hall, they can have the luxury of walking slowly and taking a long time to bow. Students, on the other hand, need to move elegantly but promptly to the instrument, so that the obligatory applause they receive from friends is spontaneous and not artificially prolonged.

One of my best students performed often in Hubbard Recital Hall, as Greenfield Hall was once called. With a subtle move of his head, down and up, he was able to give the impression that he was bowing to the whole audience. The hall is deep and narrow. Later on, I witnessed him bow for a big audience in a very wide theater after a concerto performance. I realized then that his subtle head movements seemed directed only to those sitting right in front of him. Never did he acknowledge the audiences to the right or left, as well as in the balcony.

It is worth mentioning that sometimes students react inappropriately to applause, demonstrating facial expressions having no relation to the substance of the music they have rendered. Beethoven Op. 111 should not be followed by a silly grin of self-

satisfaction with the audience's reception. In fact, the artist must give a sense of total immersion in the music to the point where the final applause should feel like an unwelcome interruption. It should take a few well-measured seconds to come back to reality and realize that one is on stage and in front of an audience.

The reaction to the audience applause in offering encores is an art which Barenboim exemplifies, for one. He presents each well-planned encore as though he had just thought of it spontaneously, and that is convincingly reflected in his body language. I hate when my students project a sense of desperation to play an encore, in order to show some hidden facet of their virtuosity, instead of making it look like a gesture of appreciation to the audience.

I could go on and on. All these problems are multiplied when students perform as soloists. I always remind them that although they are the soloists, the artistic results are equally the responsibility of the conductor and every musician in the orchestra. That sense of sharing seems to be elusive. I've too often noticed my students bowing at a time when the conductor is asking members of the orchestra to stand up and be recognized. How ludicrous and embarrassing.

In one case, my student's performance was so outstanding that an encore would have been appropriate. It was planned, but it didn't happen. Why? Instead of going backstage promptly after the first and second bows, the soloist stood there and relished the applause for too long, so it was not sustained into a third curtain call.

I often ask my students to applaud in front of me. Obviously, it is not a pleasant exercise unless it is inspired by the ecstasies one enjoys after a great performance. Students take audience applause for granted without realizing that their actions on stage must be well-timed to the audience response. When performing in a large venue to a large audience, there will always be a division whereby some are applauding while others are not. When the audience is small, as with most graduation recitals at MSM, the burden on the artist to handle this appropriately is much greater.

KH: Your description of Barenboim's handling of encores is interesting. Have any of your students mastered that sense of the spontaneous?

SM: The best example among my students has been Yuan Sheng, when he won the Ignacio Cervantes competition in Cuba. I have already described it in the biographical section, but it is appropriate to cite it here as well in response to your question.

He played three encores, something unusual following a concerto performance.. Each one seemed as though it was the last one. Actually, we had prepared them because I knew how the audience would react to his playing.

We decided that the final encore would be the *Danza "Adios a Cuba"* (Farewell to Cuba), by leading nineteenth-century Cuban composer, Ignacio Cervantes, about whom I had

written a book. The *Danza* was written when Cervantes had to flee Cuba during its struggle to become independent from Spain. This is a sentimental work that has something of a national anthem. Once you play that piece, you can't play anything else. So, when he played this *Danza*, he closed the piano as I had told him to do. That gesture made people jump to their feet and scream "Bravo!" for a long time!

KH: What do you suggest if we are playing a Sonata by Beethoven and someone in the audience applauds between movements?

SM: It is important to welcome new audiences to concerts. Sometimes they attend because a relative or friend is performing. This could lead to attending other concerts for the sake of the music and of the artists involved and not because of social pressure. It is obvious that they will need some coaching as to what their behavior should be. Very often we will have someone sitting in front of us whose head is moving in accordance with the rhythm. Sometimes they walk into a recital that has already started and have no qualms about interrupting everyone else's concentration and walking forward, searching for the best seat. Chewing gum is a given, even among classical music students. Sometimes they show up at a lesson and I have to point out that their mouth and their fingers might be in rhythmic conflict.

These things must be imparted in a subtle way. I have a student who chews gum constantly. I am sure she does so while practicing. How can I convince her that chewing gum is not perceived as elegant behavior? I have said to her that if she attended a concert at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and noticed that most people in the audience were chewing gum, and then attended a baseball game and noticed that almost no one chews gum, then I would be the first one to recommend gum-chewing since that is obviously the habit of the most sophisticated members of society.

When an interruption takes place as a result of uncalled-for applause, I ask my students to make a subtle but distinct "stop" gesture with the right hand, which sends a clear message that hearing a brilliant ending does not necessarily mean that is time to applaud. The member of the audience that made the transgression will now make sure that in the future he or she waits until everybody applauds. Unfortunately, I have found resistance from my students, who deem it impolite to make such a gesture. I wish they would all have attended Lang Lang's last recital at Carnegie Hall. Alexandre Moutouzkine and I were sitting on stage and clearly witnessed Lang Lang's control of exactly the same situation.

KH: Even though I have studied with you through three degrees at MSM, and I am already familiar with your style of teaching, this has been a most enlightening and enjoyable exploration. Thank you so much for all your time and candor. After a lifetime of teaching, what is your own personal sense of accomplishment? Are you satisfied?

SM: I could never be. Based on early expectations of those who were familiar with my potential, I did not accomplish my goal to be a performer. My pinched-nerve problems showed up too soon for me to be able to enjoy the fruits of my training and my own

musicality. As a result, I embarked on a teaching career which has allowed me some opportunity to express the music in me through my most talented students. But, to what degree is that really possible? Can anyone, no matter how many hours I would spend teaching him or her a Chopin mazurka, ever play it the way I would? That frustration has been part of my life ever since I lost my pianistic control.

As a teacher, I cannot but feel guilty thinking of all of those who studied with me much too soon, before I had the experience to become the best teacher I could be. I can think of the thousands of dollars they spent in tuition and the large scholarships they received. When I meet a student I taught twenty or thirty years ago, I almost feel that I should offer to return their money! Yet I imagine that if I were to teach for another fifty years, I would feel the same toward the students I am teaching today. These thoughts reflect only my frustration with myself, my limited knowledge and how little time I have left to learn everything I would like to know, to be able to be the best teacher I can be.

KH: You have given us many perceptive and thoughtful insights into your pedagogical approach. I am sure they will be of great value to future teachers.

SM: Readers who expected me to describe how I teach a specific prelude and fugue by Bach or an étude by Chopin or a prelude by Debussy will be disappointed. I would never attempt to do that because I would need the aural feedback from a specific student in order to know what my suggestions would be. A student attempting to follow any specific instruction from a book will arrive at results that are permeated with his or her playing habits, without the advantage of a diagnostic follow-up. That is only possible in an actual lesson.

The development of musicality and technique is such that it is almost impossible to describe in words. Some have written books with specific examples of their teaching, which I find extremely boring. Others have followed my line of approach and have adhered to general principles.

I note that you have assembled a much-appreciated collection of testimonials from my students, some of whom are quite specific in describing their lessons and their progress. As you read them, the differences in their experiences illustrate very well why it would also be misleading for me to attempt specific instructions that would apply to everyone. It is obvious that I have no actual “method,” and I mainly follow my observations and my intuition.

The conclusion must be that this discussion cannot be a substitute for actual piano lessons. A student who wishes to experience what it means to study with a teacher must take actual lessons with that teacher. Any book that the teacher might have written can only be a supplement, not a substitute.

I do believe, however, that every teacher should have a philosophy, outlook and guiding principles. I hope that my answers have made a contribution to a better understanding of our profession.

Part III

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1.

The ways in which Solomon Mikowsky has influenced me are too many for this essay. A doctoral dissertation that researches deeply into his philosophy, such as this, is a very important contribution. Myself, I can only touch on a few points of importance.

Mr. Mikowsky made me be aware of musical genres and composers I had not learned much about before I became his student. With him, I started to play more music by French and Spanish composers, as well as composers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. My repertoire expanded tremendously.

He also made me aware of the peculiar interpretive style of pianists that belong to the so-called “Golden Age.” The most recent pianist representing that style was Shura Cherkassky, to whom Mr. Mikowsky dedicated the Steinway concert grand he donated for his hall at the Manhattan School of Music. A bronze plaque on the piano is our teacher’s tribute to the artistry of this great artist. During my lessons, I have also been introduced to Ignaz Friedman, Benno Moiseiwitsch, Solomon (Cutner), Jorge Bolet, Alicia de Larrocha and many others.

Mr. Mikowsky made both verbal observations as well as practical demonstrations at the instrument. His playing has a beautiful singing tone, great dynamic range and subtle pedaling. His explanations were always concise and right on target. I remember his remarks about the *portato* touch in a passage at the beginning of the second movement of the Beethoven “Emperor” concerto. To achieve Beethoven’s intentions of slurred staccato notes, he wanted me to play every note with a separate stroke of the whole arm moving away from the keyboard, with the help of the pedal. This approach imitates the violins playing each note with one bow, *detaché*.

Mr. Mikowsky has a great sense of organization. He knows when a student is ready to listen to a particular performance, to play for a suggested teacher, or to participate in a master class. As a result, I profited from listening to one of his students perform Corigliano’s *Étude-Fantasy* at Zankel Hall; he encouraged me to play Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück No. VIII* for Reiko Fueting, my theory teacher and expert on this music; he recommended me to play a Schubert sonata for Richard Goode in a master class; and he also encouraged me to play contemporary repertoire for Nils Vigeland, a master composer himself.

Mr. Mikowsky notices the strong and weak points of his students and knows how to help them achieve their goals. In 2006 I performed the Barber Piano Concerto with the MSM Symphony, conducted by JoAnn Falletta, after winning the school’s concerto competition. I played well, my self-esteem was high, and my teacher suggested that I go to Spain to compete in the Carlet International Piano Competition. His suggestion was right on target and I won the first prize.

One of his most valuable assets is his ability to make efficient use of his time. For example, once when I was too tired to play in a lesson, Mr. Mikowsky used the hour teaching me stage deportment instead of wasting it. This knowledge has been extremely helpful to me and I know that Mr. Mikowsky considers it is an important element for success.

Mr. Mikowsky supports his students by word and by deed. In 2010, when I was no longer his student, he allowed me to perform in his hall as part of my series of concerts dedicated to Samuel Barber's 100th anniversary.

His ability to adjust his teaching tactics to different circumstances are also praiseworthy. When he sees that a student is not careful about the text or unsure of his or her performance, he steps in with clear and pointed remarks. When I played Chopin's *Andante Spianato and Grande Polonaise Brillante*, his many suggestions on phrasing and pedaling contributed to the structural sense and produced beautiful sonorities. On the other hand, when I played Barber's Piano Concerto, he trusted my intentions and did not impose his own interpretation.

I recently performed Falla's Harpsichord Concerto, a work that has a special place in Mr. Mikowsky's heart. His own teacher in Cuba, César Pérez Sentenat (who personally knew Debussy and Falla), premièred the concerto in Cuba soon after its world première by Wanda Landowska, to whom it was dedicated. Mr. Mikowsky was particularly pleased that the interest in Spanish music he had awakened within me had led to my exploration and performance of this important work.

Mr. Mikowsky's influence goes well beyond the realm of music. I escaped trouble many times just by listening to his advice to be strong and not afraid to say "no" politely, firmly rejecting suggestions that could potentially waste my energy and time without benefit. He was particularly helpful in my dealings with my lawyer after my mother had suffered an accident, in matters related to her medical care and legal negotiations. He understood and shared with us the gravity of the situation. Mr. Mikowsky wants us to be mature, self-assertive individuals with a high sense of self-esteem in music-making as in life.

He also knows when to exert positive pressure on a student and when to praise his or her achievements. When I was working on my doctoral dissertation, his phone calls encouraged me to proceed forward and not to be distracted by people who stood in my way. When I was a contestant in a competition, he helped me go through my rounds with confidence and optimism. In short, he teaches the art of life. His ability to organize a student's future plans, goals and repertoire are remarkable. He is a great architect and his creations are our concerts. He will do anything he can—giving his time, money, contacts—to further the success of his students. His repertoire decisions are key to our success. He knew that Barber's music fit me well, even before I played a single piece by this composer. His instincts were correct and I can see it in the results.

There is a note carved in wood hanging on the wall in Mr. Mikowsky's studio that reads: "Life is like the piano; what you get out of it depends on how you play it." By teaching

us how to play as beautifully as we can and how to deal with life's challenges, he has given us everything to make us become our own teachers. Through his lessons and master classes, I have felt a positive energy that helps me with my music and with my life. I am proud to have my photo with my teacher on the wall among his students.

Dr. Maxim Anikushin

Doctor of Musical Arts, Manhattan School of Music, 2008

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 2004–2008

2.

Although I studied with Solomon Mikowsky for only one year in the Professional Studies Performance Certificate program at MSM (2007–2008) and one summer at the international piano festivals in Spain and the Canary Islands (2009), I have learned a great deal from him in that short time. I strive to pass his teaching on to my students. Dr. Mikowsky is not simply a great piano teacher; he is also a very supportive mentor, who prepares performing artists with honesty and confidence.

Whereas I already had early childhood training and performance experience, I received wonderful new ideas from him on performing matters—not only musical, but more broadly artistic. His suggestions were always valuable, not only because of his vast musical knowledge, but also because of his integrity as a musician and as a person. He would never hesitate in either his criticism nor his encouragement. Thus when the student is finally ready to perform, nothing but the music is in his or her mind.

Graduates from Dr. Mikowsky's class promptly move from the student status to that of independent artist. He fosters the individual and artistic thinking of students to the highest degree, encouraging freedom of musical and philosophical choices based on their knowledge and artistic intuition, so vital in making a performance a representation of a individual artist. I am fortunate and honored to have had the chance to work so closely and be affiliated with such a great pedagogue, artist and simply wonderful person.

Dr. Hayk Arsenyan

Professional Studies, Manhattan School of Music, 2008

Adjunct Professor, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 2007–2008

3.

I have been studying with Solomon Mikowsky for five years. It is hard to summarize his contribution to my musical development, for it has been enormous. Perhaps the most valuable thing for me in our relationship is that Dr. Mikowsky has always treated me as a responsible, serious, mature musician, from the moment I came to his studio at the age of

twenty-one. During lessons, Dr. Mikowsky always explains the reasons for his technical and interpretive suggestions and why they fit my personality best.

Being very independent and stubborn by nature, I have nevertheless learned to trust my teacher even when he does not explain his reasons, because by now I understand his method. Once I performed the Mozart C Major Concerto, K.503, from memory. He went on to change most of the fingering. I was puzzled, as I did not understand why his fingering was better than mine. I felt I knew the piece very well and sounded secure when I performed it. “Just take it home and try playing it with my fingering,” he urged me. I followed his instructions, and the concerto took on a completely new feeling and sound. The scales were smoother and more nimble, the music more alive and stylistically characteristic. At the next lesson Dr. Mikowsky went over each scale and explained the reason why his fingering made more sense, making sure that not only did I trust his advice, but also that I would be able to find the better fingering next time I learned a similar piece by myself.

His attitude with me, as with each of his students, is very individual. The pieces he suggests for me, the attention to style, the tempi, the dynamics, are all in accordance with my own musical personality. It has become easy and natural for me to follow his thoughts, ideas, and suggestions. As a result, I go on to analyze the music more deeply and learn more about my playing and relationship to music. This is in addition to valuable advice on selecting recordings and how to compare them on many levels, suggestions as to which concerts to attend, and recommendations of books.

During all of the years of studying with Dr. Mikowsky I never felt like merely a student, someone who is only supposed to listen and blindly follow advice. I have always felt welcome to express my own opinion, never constricted. I believe that this kind of relationship between a teacher and a student is rare and immensely valuable. It contributes tremendously to the emotional and professional artistic growth of the student.

Alexandra Beliakovich

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2010

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, since 2010

Studies with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 2006–2011 (current)

4.

I have always appreciated Solomon Mikowsky’s guidance as being unique to each student. He takes into account a student’s temperament, personality, and individual strengths in order to develop his or her talent with a personal approach. Dr. Mikowsky’s interest in incorporating unusual and underplayed repertoire together with standard classics makes for a well-rounded and uniquely equipped student. He teaches on so many levels and, with only a few words, is able to pinpoint exactly what a performance needs in order to elevate it to its highest artistic potential.

Daniela Bracchi

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2006

Doctoral of Musical Arts, Manhattan School of Music, candidate since 2006

Member, Piano and Chamber Music Faculty at MSM Precollege Division

Member, Piano Faculty at Third Street Music School

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 2004–2008

5.

When I came to study with Solomon Mikowsky, I was full of enthusiasm but had no technique. I have now been studying with him for the past seven years. Through his methodology and patience, he infused me with good practice habits and developed the ability for me to be able to play all kinds of repertoire. He basically taught me how to play the piano!

Like most great men, there is a paradox with him: extreme strictness with the score, but open-mindedness to musical ideas. He encouraged my interest and love of unusual as well as contemporary music. My progress, both musically and technically, as well as the breadth and the scope of my repertoire, has been enormous.

Words are inadequate to express what I owe to Dr. Mikowsky. He has provided me with an excellent foundation as a pianist, the ability to learn all types of repertoire, and kindled my intellectual curiosity. I will always treasure my years with him.

Robert Buxton

Bachelor of Music, Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2008–2012

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM Precollege Division, 2004–2008

6.

It is difficult to write about someone I have known for such a long time and who has played such a vital role in all aspects of my development as a performing musician and pedagogue and to express my thoughts within just a few sentences. But in trying to summarize Solomon Mikowsky's contribution to my education at Manhattan School of Music and subsequent musical career, I would like to focus on a few key comments that I still remember from my weekly lessons, and which still resonate loudly. "You could play this more beautifully," was one. Another was, "This music fits you like a glove," and still another: "You just don't understand Chopin."

The first remark is filled with encouragement and the idea that music is ever malleable and full of new possibilities, both for interpretation and expression. It is a simple statement that conveys our essential duty as musicians: to give our best shot at bringing a piece to life, and to make others come to love music just as much as we do; to tirelessly

keep searching for the perfect tone quality, balance between the parts, conveyance of the most accurate mood. In short, the desire to play everything “more beautifully” should always loom large before us as the ultimate goal.

The second quotation always reminds me to stick to what I can do best and develop upon that; to choose composers wisely and select pieces that I can bond with, pieces I understand and through which I can make my own voice be heard; to believe in what I am playing, and to build a repertoire I can treasure throughout my entire life, honing it to the perfection it deserves.

The third quotation is, of course, an apt example of Dr. Mikowsky’s candor, and the singular trait in his teaching style which I probably appreciate the most. My best learning experiences have followed the most serious criticisms, and what a gift it is, in the end, to be told the truth! The honesty with which Dr. Mikowsky spoke his mind has in turn inspired me to ask myself difficult and uncomfortable questions, to analyze my actions and choices, in music and beyond, and to separate wishful thinking from reality. It’s a useful lesson, because teaching is a true responsibility, and objectivity is a great asset to have by your side. I could always count on Dr. Mikowsky to share with me what he really thought and to guide me in my decisions, for which I have been all the better.

I would like to extend a big thank-you to a mentor and teacher who never tired of contributing his time and energy, humor and wisdom to us all, and who helped shape us into better versions of ourselves.

Dr. Elina Christova

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1998

Doctor of Musical Arts, Manhattan School of Music, 2006

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 1996–2001

7.

I could write volumes on what Dr. Solomon Mikowsky has meant to my life, but it is because of him that I cannot find time these days to do so. However, what I write here might go beyond the strict regulations on length of paragraphs allowed, thus marking one of the rare occasions I ‘disobey’ him.

I am not ashamed to admit that I was a scared 12 year old boy from the Philippines when I moved to New York City and met Dr. Mikowsky, because eventually, he helped erase that fear. In my first lesson, he told me that although I was naturally musical, I had to make up ten of my formative years of piano playing technique never developed while growing up in Manila. To hear that was so overwhelming that I thought it was impossible! Or at least I thought I had another 10 years to make that up so why start now? On my third lesson, he heard a piece he assigned and quickly came to the conclusion that I wasn’t practicing. He went to the phone to call up my mother – at enough distance for me to overhear – and told her that the scholarship I was granted was not working out

because I wasn't doing my share; that it seemed I would rather go back to the Philippines. That moment stunned me like a thousand volts of electricity, and made me realize that this man could help me achieve my dreams. Ever since that day, my respect for him has never waned. I cannot even allow myself to address him by his first name, or without the title 'Dr.', as he requested just a couple of years ago. It is in Philippine culture to address a person with their title as a form of utmost respect.

On Musicality & Technique.

Looking back, the process to develop the technique that was deemed 'lost' was complex then. But today, it is quite simple if the process is followed in organized steps: learning music in detail, being faithful to the score, finding options until the proper fingering is achieved, slow & exaggerated practicing hands separately, among many others. The technical security I thought was impossible to achieve in 10 years became almost second nature in three quick years. As a teacher, I eventually realized musicality cannot be taught, but the tools and 'how-to's can help the natural musicality & individuality to surface. This is the reason why no two students of Dr. Mikowsky ever sound alike. All he did was identify our weaknesses & strengthen them, guide us to recognize our assets, explore others' palettes so we could discover ours, and pave a way for us to fly to our destinies.

On Performance & Competitions.

Dr. Mikowsky's obsession with a beautiful sound, its projection, its range & depth, the versatility of repertoire, and creating characters in the music being played, are the prime ingredients to a delectable performance recipe. They go well in competitions too because they appeal to most jurors. When I started competing as a child, I had the impression that competitions were like the Olympics – the more powerful & the faster win the gold. Right before going onstage at my first attempt to compete at the MSM Preparatory Division Concerto Competition, Dr. Mikowsky said to me: "Play a concert. Don't compete". I will never forget how I was tearing during that performance because it was the first time I actually listened to myself, savored those ingredients, and felt what I was playing. I lost that competition but I found myself by losing myself in the music!

On Being Human.

What has been said about Dr. Mikowsky's generosity, kindness, & his overall greatness as a human being, does not even scratch the surface of who he really is. Aside from the genuine mentorship, I would like to share snippets of the uncountable moments that defined whose footsteps I would aspire to follow.

One late night after the first ever class meeting I attended went overtime, without my asking, he spontaneously gave me \$10 to take a cab home not knowing that I only had a subway token in my pocket. He then became my role model.

Even though I had a 102-degree fever during the quarterfinals of the Pilar Bayona Competition in Zaragoza, he urged me to go on. I eventually reached the Finals and was given the 3rd Prize. He gave me strength.

He encouraged me to join the Concerto Competition in Sicily, lacking a Mozart Concerto which I had only 2 weeks to learn, apart from reviewing the rest of the required programs. In an overseas call, I said it might not be a good idea to join, at which he retorted “Are you saying you cannot do it?” I came in 2nd Place. He taught me perseverance.

These are just drops in a bucket that come to mind but I choose not to further overstep my already disobedient act. Therefore, I conclude my testimonial by declaring that the most valuable lesson I learned from Dr. Mikowsky, is that Music is not only supposed to be studied, performed, listened to, shared, or discussed. Music possesses the power to change people, preserve mankind, and heal souls. And those do not need to be performed at Carnegie Hall nor be given a rave review for anyone to be measured!

Jovianney Emmanuel Cruz

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1989

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1991

Member, Piano Faculty, College of Music, University of the Philippines

Founder & former Artistic Director, FILFEST

Founder & Artistic Director, The Ultimate Pianist Competition

Founder, Artistic Director, & Artist-Faculty, OPUSFEST: The International Classical Music Camp

Co-Founder, Ang Misyon, Inc.

Artistic Director, Sistema for the Filipino Youth & Orchestra of the Filipino Youth

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM Precollege Division, 1980–1984, College Division, 1984– 1991

8.

I thoroughly enjoyed studying with Solomon Mikowsky. My life would not have been the same without him. I had been referred to him by another wonderful teacher, Herbert Stessin, with whom I studied earlier. I earned my Master’s Degree at MSM in 1980.

Mr. Mikowsky had an uncanny knack for fingerings, which always worked at whatever tempo. His demonstrations were always fluent, full of textural clarity, rhythmic control and sensitive pedaling. His demeanor projected a high level of calm and control. His extensive record collection assisted his students in identifying themselves with specific artists in their interpretations. He was always interested and involved, but never judgmental. He was always caring and attentive to his students’ individual needs. His recommendations about my future were always apposite. Thirty years later, I can say it worked out for me.

I think of him every day when I sit down to practice, and I’m proud to say that he and I continue to communicate after all these years. I still know to this day that he is interested in me and happy to hear from me. He takes time to listen and comment on my CDs and concerts; he includes me in mailings about his other students. I also know that I’m not alone and that he is proud of all of his students. He sets the example for all of us in his love for MSM. My experiences at MSM were wonderful, and MSM is indeed my

home away from home. Following in Mr. Mikowsky's footsteps, I have bequeathed a large portion of my estate to the school.

Michael Devine

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1980

Piano Pedagogy, Manhattan School of Music, 1990

Music Director, Somers Academy (CT)

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 1978–1980

9.

I first met Solomon Mikowsky a quarter of a century ago. He was a jury member at the Infanta Cristina competition in Madrid. I was sixteen years old and about to finish my high school education, and was looking forward to continuing my musical education in the States. The next year, 1987, I was accepted at Manhattan School of Music. I continued my education there under his guidance until 1998, when I completed my Doctoral of Musical Arts degree.

I consider Dr. Mikowsky to be my “musical father.” Studying with him allowed me to flourish not only as a pianist and musician in general, but also as a person. Not only do I share his views on music, but in many respects also in life and philosophy. Now that I am teacher as well, I fondly recall how he, while infusing his ideas in my playing, also respected and nurtured my own musical personality. This, I believe, is one of the things that make him such a great teacher.

Today I consider Dr. Mikowsky not only my teacher, but also a colleague and close friend.

Dr. Gustavo Díaz-Jerez

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1992

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1994

Doctor of Musical Arts, Manhattan School of Music, 2000

Professor of Piano, Conservatorio Superior de Música del País Vasco “Musikene”

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 1987–1997

10.

Solomon Mikowsky was my teacher beginning when I was nine years old until I was sixteen. He was a hugely formative influence, a musician whom I still look up to.

I came to Dr. Mikowsky fresh from my excellent neighborhood piano teacher. Committed and musical though she was, I had fooled her comprehensively, sight-reading new material at every lesson. Dr. Mikowsky saw through that immediately. “You are cute now,” he would tell me, “but you won’t be cute in ten years. You need to practice.”

In addition to an iron work ethic, he taught me so much. He valued a *parlando* style, a spoken unevenness, which is an aesthetic that I find hugely influential to this day. He prized clarity of contrapuntal lines over the seductive simplicity of melody. And he was fearless in his approach to interpretation. My happiest memories are of our mammoth listening sessions in which he would play record after record, considering countless interpretations of whatever repertoire I was playing. “Here comes the crazy one,” he would say, putting on the most outlandish recording, and I would realize that the interpretive art was not an exercise in textual fidelity but a challenge to the limits of my imagination.

This was my parents’ expression of appreciation at the time I was his student:

I want you to know how much Renée and I appreciate your very fine and sensitive teaching and guidance of Simone’s music. So much of today’s world and taste seems dominated to me by very quick stimuli and responses, almost the length of TV commercials. It is the “weight” of Simone’s musical training that is so impressive, so tied to a more durable tradition, and full of poetry and integrity.

Thanks!

Simon Dinnerstein
[noted American painter]

Thank you, dear Dr. Mikowsky, for everything that you gave me to help me grow into the musician that I am.

Love,

Simone Dinnerstein
SONY recording artist
Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM Precollege Division, 1981–1989

11.

I feel lucky to be a student of Solomon Mikowsky. He has a sensitive and individual approach to teaching and helps his students find their individual styles. He has helped me see what in my playing requires attention and improvement. My repertoire has expanded enormously under his guidance, including contemporary music. I am now able to combine standard works with lesser-known but equally valuable pieces.

He chooses repertoire according to students’ needs and for their benefit. He encourages his students to look at various different editions of music in order to explore fingering or phrasing solutions, as well as to listen to recordings, not to copy from them but to

become inspired and try different ways of interpreting, to arrive at independence and one's own true, personal interpretation. He is a great and open-minded teacher.

Peter Fancovic

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, since 2008

Studies with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 2008–2011 (current)

12.

Solomon Mikowsky's teaching was pivotal in my development as a musician, teacher, and person. His pedagogical method makes room for individualism. It is not that he doesn't have a solution for any technical matter, but that he approaches music in an organic way, relating it to the emotion of the performer and appropriateness of style and composer's intentions. This is what is so unusual about his teaching. No two pianists from his studio will sound the same, no idea will be predictable. While great attention is given to the architecture of music when he teaches it, he never has a need to overanalyze anything in a way that might subsequently encumber naturalness.

If the music is great, there is no style that he does not feel comfortable working in, having no allegiance to any isolated period and having no patience with trite works.

I was especially fortunate to be his assistant in the Precollege. He saw the beauty in the most elemental aspects of pianism, giving the vast repertoire of children's piano works the status of masterpieces. His reverence for polyphony pervaded, from the sinfonia to the most complex double fugue.

Solomon Mikowsky taught me to work and never stop working. The training he gave me provided me with the confidence to utilize those skills on my own.

Robin Freund-Epstein

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1986

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1987

Member, Piano and Chamber Music Faculty, MSM Precollege Division

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 1982–1987

13.

Throughout the fifteen years that I have known Solomon Mikowsky, I have admired his passion for beauty, music, piano, and teaching. Equally admirable are his humanity and generosity toward students, and his philanthropy toward the educational institutions close to his heart. I consider myself fortunate to have been among the students to have benefited from these qualities.

I have vivid memories of our lessons: the intense listening sessions that drew upon his extensive knowledge of the recorded heritage of pianism; numerous class meetings where we had opportunities to play in front of each other; the professional concerts that he organized for his students, often secretly helping to balance the budget out of his own hinds; his advice on the various aspects of concert life that are necessary today apart from the actual playing.

I believe it is a tribute to his individualized approach that so many of his students play so differently and that most of us maintain a connection with him far beyond the time of our study.

I value the way my relationship with Dr. Mikowsky has evolved throughout the years. I am grateful for his help and support, and enjoy our contact whenever we have a chance nowadays.

Kirill Gerstein

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1999

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2000

Professor of Piano, Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart

Myrios Classics recording artist

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 1996–2000

14.

I studied with Dr. Mikowsky from January 1977 to May 1978, receiving my Master's Degree in Piano Performance. I am now almost sixty years "young," teaching in a community arts school in the Yale-New Haven area with a fairly large studio of forty-five students. I still do some performing and accompanying, but my passion is teaching. I appreciated Dr. Mikowsky's teaching style so very much. He was always patient, encouraging and helpful. Up to that time there were plenty of teachers that used fear, ridicule, and a shame-based controlling approach that only produced tension in me and certainly no music! I learned from him that negative teaching techniques are unnecessary. Furthermore they almost never really work, not without a lot of collateral damage.

Dr. Mikowsky took a group of us to hear Horowitz, and also Rubinstein, at Carnegie Hall. These concerts were almost "out-of-body" experiences for me. He secured a block of tickets for the students in his studio, and then afterwards took us all out to one of his favorite Cuban restaurants. There certainly was no requirement that he do this for us, but it spoke volumes to me. By his actions, I knew he really cared about his students. He always provided a warm, nurturing, welcoming, and safe environment in his studio. I strive to do this in my own teaching to this very day.

In my lessons with Dr. Mikowsky, he used one comment quite a bit with me: "You need to play with more color!" I can still hear him reminding me of this, each and every time I

sit at the piano. I really, *really* do try to make every phrase full of color and meaning, and encourage my students to do the same.

I am certainly nowhere near the level and caliber of students that he has now, but he brought out the very best in me and by his example, taught me the essence of what a good teacher should be. Thank you, thank you, thank you, Dr. Mikowsky!

Diane Pendleton Hull

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1978

Member, Piano faculty, The Neighborhood Music School (New Haven, CT)

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 1977–1978

15.

To try to write about my experience as a student of my beloved piano teacher, Dr. Mikowsky, is like trying to sum of up the grand and great city of Rome in a few paragraphs—but I will try my best!

I started my formal study with Solomon Mikowsky in the Precollege Division when I was fourteen years old. By the time I completed my DMA I was in my twenties. During those years, Dr. Mikowsky's influence on my artistic as well as my personal development was immeasurable. To this day, I feel grateful and fortunate that he was my role model during my formative years. He taught me how to appreciate the beauty of sound, to explore the possibilities of the instrument and to find my own way of expressing emotion.

In my early twenties, his influence gradually expanded beyond the piano and music. He taught me to care about the outside world and my responsibility towards myself and to my country to become an educated person. I still have a deeply imprinted memory of a trip to Europe. I sat next to Dr. Mikowsky on our way to Spain from New York. On the airplane, he pulled out many old copies of *The New York Times* from his carry-on bag and started to read. I asked him "Why do you carry so many old newspapers?" He replied: "I didn't have time to read everything that I wanted to learn about during the school year. You know, once I had accumulated so many newspapers that, by the time I was reading an article about a newly elected President, another one had already superseded him. The passenger sitting next to me was shocked to notice that the headline I was reading was from four years earlier!"

He always wanted us to know about everything. A comment he made to his students awakened me and changed my attitude towards the world. He said, "You are my piano students, and you represent the elite of your countries. I would like to see more of you paying attention to the world's matters and issues. Expand your views beyond the piano." Indeed, since childhood, most of my time was spent practicing, practicing and practicing. My curiosity beyond the black-and-white keys was limited indeed. Ever since that day, I made an effort to learn new things. It has been good to care and reach out into real life.

“Be sincere and genuine when you express the music in you.” Sitting next to him during concerts, I can’t recall how many times Dr. Mikowsky would grunt with his usual agonizing “*Argh!*” when performances lacked feeling. “It doesn’t touch our heart, Chi-Ying! Remember, character projection with a sense of proportion, sincerity and a beautiful sound are the basic elements of a great performance!”

Beyond making us into good pianists and musicians, he always wanted us to be intellectually curious, to be genuine and sincere and to do what is right.

Dr. Chi-Ying Hung

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1996

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1998

Doctor of Musical Arts, Manhattan School of Music, 2003

Former member, Piano faculty, 92nd Street Y

Former Adjunct Professor, La Guardia Community College, City University of New York

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM Precollege Division, 1990–1992, College Division, 1992–2003

16.

I first met Solomon Mikowsky in the early 1980s when I was in my mid-twenties. It was a blessing for me because he became a mentor figure, which I needed at that time.

Many young professional musicians, in search of musical development and future careers, go through periods of difficulty. Motivations can give way to doubts and insecurities. Solomon Mikowsky’s approach allows you to share his belief in one’s talent. He guides you and develops within you the musical insight that he believes needs improvement.

As a mentor he does not stop with words of advice and encouragement but follows through with actions. He really wants his students to go to the limit of their abilities. He provides financial help, finds positions for his students to teach, chooses pieces for competitions, and secures performance opportunities. In sum, he cares!

A particular trait which I admire and respect is that he is just in his decisions. His judgments are honest, with the pride of an artist unyielding to corruption or prejudice. That is one of the reasons his students continue to stay in touch with him over the years.

Dr. Youngho Kim

Doctor of Musical Arts, Manhattan School of Music, 1988

Professor of Piano, Yonsei University (Seoul)

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 1982–1988

17.

During the eight years I have been studying with Solomon Mikowsky, I learned not only how to play the piano as beautifully as I can, but also how to appreciate art, architecture, cuisine, history, and all the other artistic and intellectual achievements of every culture. He reminds me constantly to look at the whole of humanity—both the beauty and the ugliness—and passionately urges and enables his pupils to use their minds ever more openly and critically.

I will always thank him for freeing me from my little world, and teaching me to be excited about what is yet to come in my life. Not surprisingly, in reviewing the previous few sentences, I come to the realization that piano is only a small part of his teaching. I've learned so much more!

Jeong Yoon Lee

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2009

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2011

Doctor of Musical Arts candidate, Manhattan School of Music, since 2011

Studies with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 2004–2011 (current)

18.

It was about a decade ago when I first met Solomon Mikowsky. Upon coming to the States, I was a young ambitious girl whose life had been filled with endless competitions, where the ultimate goal was accuracy and the fastest possible tempo. With high hopes, I stepped into his studio for my first lesson, prepared to be inspired by his great mastery. After I had been playing for about two minutes, he stopped me in order to go over the most basic elements of finger technique. At the next lesson, he worked on finding the proper fingering for the repertoire I had been assigned.

For someone who had been playing *La Campanella* at age eleven, I cannot describe the disappointment I felt, having to go through the very fundamentals of playing the instrument. When my technique began to develop, he gave me a piece by a contemporary composer I had never heard of, which was full of dissonance and intricate rhythms. Step by step, my mind began to open up beyond the narrow mindset I was reluctant to reject, and I began to uncover the elements that make art beautiful.

It was not an easy transformation, involving my own integrity as a person and as a musician. Without Mr. Mikowsky, I would never have discovered Mompou playing Mompou, or Shura Cherkassky playing Saint-Saëns/Godowsky “The Swan.” How could I possibly explain what I felt throughout this process and what I have learned since then?

I would like to express my appreciation to someone who has always been not only a great teacher, but a father for me—the one who made me see, hear and feel music in a way that fits me best, and who taught me the rationale for my place in the world of music.

Regardless of whatever limitations I had, I wished to achieve the utmost of my potential as an artist and individual, capable of seeing colors on a blank piece of paper and painting beautiful lines in thin air.

Solomon Mikowsky is an artist, an educator and an individual who has devoted his entire life to the kind of education he believes in. He has certainly established the foundation that allows his students to aspire to the discovery of true art within themselves. The contribution he has made is invaluable.

Mijung Lee

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2011

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, since 2011

Studies with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM Precollege Division, 2001–2007, College Division, 2007–2011 (current)

19.

The enormous dedication and passion with which Solomon Mikowsky embraces his pedagogical profession are impressive and admirable.

Two years of studies with him have led me to have a different insight on many issues, especially in terms of stylistic approach and the comprehension of each work. In his teaching, Dr. Mikowsky doesn't follow any formula. His main goal is to discover and to develop the personality and the individual qualities of each student, to challenge the inner world of each musician through concentrated focus on fine nuances of sound, tempo, dynamics and phrasing, and the musical implications of fingerings, in accordance with structure and design and consistent with intellectual and emotional content.

Sofya Melikian

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2007

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 2005–2007

20.

I cannot describe in a few words the impact that Solomon Mikowsky has had on my development as a pianist. As I look back now on the five years during which I was his student at the Manhattan School of Music, I realize more than ever his exceptional gifts as an artist teacher.

Trying to characterize his teaching, I would say that he gave me much more than simple instruction on how to play this or that piece. He gave me a set of aesthetic and pianistic principles that became part of my playing and teaching ever since. His obsession with tone and sound color opened my ears to the endless possibilities of the instrument. His ears being among the most refined I have ever encountered, he pushed my own listening

to a level that I had not even dreamt of before. He polished every aspect of my playing from tone production to phrase structure and stylistic differentiation.

His impeccable musical taste was always the ideal all his students aspired to match. He cared immensely about me, both as a pianist and as a person. But his greatest gift to me was opening my mind and ears to the great pianists of the beginning of the twentieth century, which I believe changed my playing in completely unforeseen ways. I will also forever cherish the moments we both shared listening to Shura Cherkassky at Carnegie Hall.

I am forever indebted to Dr. Solomon Mikowsky for everything he has taught me.

Dr. José Ramón Méndez

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1991

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1993

Professional Studies, 1994 (Janis)

Doctor of Musical Arts, Manhattan School of Music, 2002 (Byron Janis)

Artist Piano Faculty, New York University (Steinhardt)

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 1989–1993

21.

Meeting Solomon Mikowsky was a turning point in my life. I came to his class having a great many questions but no answers. He introduced me to ideas and concepts that became my very nature.

He would criticize me when things went well and he would criticize me even more when they didn't, but he was always supportive and caring when I needed it the most. He bought a piano and put it in my room when I could not afford one. When I didn't have money to buy clothes, he gave me his suits and shirts. Now I can only imagine how ridiculous I looked in them, but how grateful I was!

He has many great qualities—and the one that I've always been most fascinated with is his impeccable taste. He possesses an incredible sense of harmony and balance within every performance and performer. I have experienced both, first-hand and second-hand, when he would point out a little detail that would transform things to an unimaginable level. It was the closest I'd ever come to witnessing Archimedes' famous quote in action: "Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world!"

His philosophy and vision have opened up a new world for me.

Alexander Moutouzkine

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2004

Professional Certificate, Manhattan School of Music, 2005

Artist Diploma, Manhattan School of Music, 2006

*Associate Piano Teacher, Manhattan School of Music
Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 2001–2006*

22.

I studied with Solomon Mikowsky from 1991 to 1997. Back in those days it was very difficult for Chinese to go abroad. The decision to go to New York and study with him was not based on any prior personal acquaintance or knowledge of his teaching style, but because one of my father's childhood friends brought a recording of one of my performances to him. That act determined my destiny!

When I called him for the first time from a school payphone, he spoke very slowly. I actually understood almost every word he said, and his kindness came through in the conversation. Soon after that I had my first lessons with him, and from then on I knew he was the right teacher for me. He appreciated my musicality and encouraged me to express myself through the musical language that felt natural to me.

Now that I am older and a teacher myself, I realize that his teaching went far beyond my initial impression. In the first place, he is very careful with the reading of the text, including attention to the smallest detail. This is very helpful to the students in the development of their interpretations and allows them to learn vast amounts of repertoire.

Second, he is very careful and meticulous about fingering, which sets him apart from most other teachers. For him, correct and consistent fingering leads to the kind of performance security that allows his students to concentrate on the musical rather than on the technical aspects of the composition. Fingering is, therefore, directly related to one's interpretation of the score.

Third, he has great intuition when it comes to choosing the right repertoire for each student. With new students, he will often assign a wide variety of short, not-so-difficult pieces in different styles, which allow him to teach the basics without the student becoming overwhelmed by dealing with too many big problems at once. Based on the student's strengths and weaknesses that emerge during this period, he will assign more difficult pieces later on that might show that student at his or her best, but always continuing to work on that his or her basic needs.

Mr. Mikowsky encourages students to express their music with understanding and imagination, never limiting themselves to what is printed on the page or even to his own suggestions. He rarely writes on the score besides sporadic fingerings in order to make sure that anything written does not distract from the student's imagination. When a piece has progressed to a certain point, he asks the student to run through the music and tells him or her, "Now, please, forget everything that I have said and just enjoy the music."

No two of his students sound the same when playing the same piece. He finds the intrinsic elements in their personalities that lead to different interpretations. His teaching can be very emotional; he follows his intuition. He often sings along and conducts while

the student is playing. Even though his voice is not the most beautiful, the musical intent and emotional message come through. His playing, in his sporadic demonstrations at the piano, is of breathtaking beauty, sensitively voiced and balanced and incorporating subtle yet daring *rubati* in true Golden-Age style.

Mr. Mikowsky can also be intellectual and analytical, whether about music itself, as if Charles Rosen were lecturing, or about the student's personal problems, as if Sigmund Freud were analyzing. He keeps a balance between intuition and intellect in his teaching whereby his students are encouraged towards the best state of mind and heart as musicians.

It would be very difficult to cover all aspects of Mr. Mikowsky's teaching style and method. To summarize, he is a teacher who understands that his role is to make his students love music and help them become sophisticated musicians through their own personalities, instead of mere piano players with a hunger for success. He understands the steps needed to achieve that through the thorough learning, not only of music, but all the arts and humanities. Only then can they aspire to be true artists!

He is more than a teacher to his students; he is also a father-figure and friend. He has financially assisted many students from underprivileged backgrounds, and has advised them in personal matters. He has remained a dear friend to many of his students, for many reasons but especially because he cares about them in their development as performers and as human beings. He does all of this with sharp wit and sense of humor.

It was exactly twenty years ago that I first spoke to Mr. Mikowsky from a payphone at Manhattan School of Music. At that time, he was only the new teacher of a lucky student. Today he is a second father, a colleague, and my friend Solomon!

Yuan Sheng

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1995

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1997

Professor of Piano, Central Conservatory of Music (Beijing)

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 1991–1997

23.

I was fortunate to study with Solomon Mikowsky over a period of eleven years, which spanned my time at the MSM Precollege Division and then on into the College Division for my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

The first thing one might notice when surveying the long list of Mikowsky's distinctive and celebrated students is how diverse these artists are. This, I believe, is a defining characteristic of great teaching, which not only nurtures students to attain high levels of musicianship and technical ability but also inspires unique, expressive pathways. I

believe this to be key to career longevity in a difficult profession and at the heart of Mr. Mikowsky's success as a teacher.

Early training: We should be very grateful that Mr. Mikowsky chose to devote substantial time to the training of young pianists at the Precollege Division of MSM in addition to his work at the College. His deep knowledge and dedication to the early training of pianists provides an invaluable link to the great teaching traditions of Eastern Europe, which hold at their core the value of high-level pedagogy from an early age.

Mr. Mikowsky's teaching approach is ideally suited to producing these high-level results for young pianists. From the very beginning of my studies with him, his method was extremely clear, decisive, and musically inspiring. Technique was developed in a structured way, taking time with scales, arpeggios, and chord patterns. He was meticulous about setting the hands correctly and developing finger strength, flexibility and independence. Most importantly, I can still clearly see his hands and wrists in my mind as he demonstrated key fundamentals of sound production and its function in articulation. The wrist is, of course, the key to the art of piano playing. Mr. Mikowsky's touch was extremely supple, yielding and sensitive. This left an indelible impression on my pianistic development. All of that, coupled with a concentrated effort on strengthening the hands and fingers, produced the ability to create and control a wide palette of colors, something which Mr. Mikowsky stressed in his teaching. Mastering strength with flexibility was one of the main themes of my early work with him.

There are many teachers who understand the fundamentals of early piano training: developing touch, technique, articulation, phrasing, contrapuntal control, stylistic awareness and so on and so forth. But what sets Mr. Mikowsky apart from other teachers is his meticulous attention to detail, highly focused expectations, and most importantly his inner drive and strong temperament. I feel that the strength of his temperament was instrumental in bringing all of these diverse, pianistic ingredients into sharp focus so successfully. This aspect should not be underestimated when considering the success of his teaching. I can say with certainty that the combination of his Eastern European roots and Cuban upbringing resulted in a potent, passionate and driving spirit which compelled me to feel and express music with heightened commitment and sensitivity.

The dedication and professionalism of Mr. Mikowsky's teaching went further to produce resilient, industrious and creative artists. He took detailed notes on all of his students. Repertoire, competitions, concerts, contacts, and points to work on were meticulously documented. As a student, I had complete certainty as to what needed to be accomplished in the near, mid- and long term. This certainty and structure for young students is crucial for establishing the technical and musical basis necessary for future artistic growth.

Transition: The transition of my work with Mr. Mikowsky to the College Division was seamless. His adult approach to his work with younger students made the transition natural. The biggest change was the inclusion of weekly class meetings. These were

wonderful gatherings of his students. Ideas were freely exchanged, a wealth of repertoire was heard and musical bonding and comradeship enhanced the learning experience.

Critical listening was an important aspect of Mr. Mikowsky's guidance. His vast discography was a constant reference point. The merits of great artists were discussed in great detail and much was learned through this process. Concert attendance was also very important. In particular, there was one artist who he insisted we hear when he performed in New York: Shura Cherkassky, whose approach to the romantic repertoire was particularly close to Mr. Mikowsky's artistic view.

The re-emergence of Cherkassky in America in the late '70s became a valuable source of pianistic inspiration for Mr. Mikowsky and subsequently his students. It was my impression that the first Cherkassky concert that he attended was an epiphany for him. I still recall his vivid description of Cherkassky's effect. I believe that within the first few notes of a Schubert impromptu, Mr. Mikowsky knew that this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Certainly, this was a "hats off gentlemen" moment.

I experienced the same when I eventually heard Cherkassky for the first time. There was no going back. Once one heard the color palette of Cherkassky, his sensuous tone and miraculous rhythmic charm, new vistas were revealed on the piano. What followed was an intense interest in his unique artistry that lasted until Cherkassky's untimely death in 1995.

Mr. Mikowsky not only delighted in Cherkassky's mercurial and unpredictable artistry but he also found it amusing that many of his professional colleagues were at odds and confounded by the liberties Cherkassky took in performance. One must remember that this was a time when a pervasive and influential strand of musicians and teachers valued a rather literal approach to interpretation, ignoring the fact that Cherkassky's "re-creative" characteristics were actually a more authoritative representation of romantic-era performance practice. I sided with Mr. Mikowsky's more embracing musical viewpoint, which was exciting and completely undogmatic.

Overview: There are many qualities that I continue to admire and reflect on in my own current practice. There is still a sense of continuous, indirect dialogue with Mr. Mikowsky after my long years of study in his class. His influence runs deep and is profound. Although not in daily contact, we still remain close. His approach and guidance continually color my own work at the piano and with my students. One of Mikowsky's important characteristics as a piano teacher was his totally vocal approach. He is a singer at heart. In fact, he gave a vocal recital while doing his doctoral studies at Columbia University and his singing was even praised by such an important opera star as Licia Albanese. Through his singing during lessons, one absorbed much, from a true sense of phrasing, shape and intensity, not unlike Chopin in this respect.

Mr. Mikowsky was furthermore able to make the transition from highly detailed, intensive work to large-scale judgments, which did not inhibit or clutter one's own personal conviction or distinctive voice. After the hard groundwork was established, he

fostered a spontaneous approach. Once released from the rigors of hard preparatory work, his students were free to express themselves passionately. This was essential. He did not tolerate boring, uncommitted playing.

Lastly, Mr. Mikowsky was blessed with marvelous musical instinct, a keen sense of drama in music and clarity of lines and texture. Without overbalancing towards any one particular pianistic virtue, he always saw the big picture—a performance in its entirety and always at the highest musical level. With this acute sensitivity, he fostered the intrinsic qualities of each student, which is why Mr. Mikowsky's students don't ever sound as if they came from the same stable—homogenized with one technical system or a confined musical viewpoint. This is Mr. Mikowsky's enduring and continuing legacy as an important pianist and teacher.

Aaron Shorr

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1983

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1984

Former Professor of Piano, Royal Academy of Music, London

Former Member, Piano Faculty, Junior Department, Royal Academy of Music, London

Head of Keyboard and Collaborative Piano, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow, United Kingdom

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM Precollege Division, 1973–1979, College Division, 1979–1984

24.

Solomon Mikowsky's training is in the romantic tradition of the old Russian school, by way of his teacher, Sascha Gorodnitzki, and the latter's teacher, Josef Lhévinne. Students of Dr. Mikowsky are privileged to receive this lineage of training. He taught us how to produce a beautiful singing tone, and led me to produce the fullest and richest sound of which I was capable.

He always focused on a natural, breathing, living phrase with subtle *rubato*, paying attention to the vocal line and the tension between melodic intervals. He emphasized the role of a performer as an entertainer, and how to be both interesting and unpredictable.

Rhythm was where he exerted the greatest influence on me. He stressed the importance of perfect, steel-like rhythmic stability in the classical works of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. Students so often have a tendency to rush without noticing, something he would not tolerate. His work in rhythmic stability was constant and pervasive. Any reference to an imperfect rhythm would inspire me enormously toward correcting it.

His artistic and musical concept of *rubato*, intimately connected with the creation of natural phrasing, was always addressed. His singing and conducting taught me to sense where to take extra time, as well as where to make up for it. He demanded a natural musical flow, rhythmic and steady, while also breathing and flexible. Technical work was always secondary to the creation of a musical image to be recreated on the piano. Work on technique was a natural process for finding solutions and

particular sound effects and was never a goal all of its own. His imagination in problem solving was infinite!

His approach to pedaling, experimenting with different possibilities, led me to important solutions in musical imagery. Fingering was one of his specialties and he often challenged me to come up with smart solutions, which rarely matched his own imagination.

His influence on my own teaching was and continues to be enormous. His advice was especially helpful in the teaching of children. He insists on their not creating a big sound before they have the body weight to support it. He emphasizes the importance of the development of good reading ability. He knows that without good sight-reading skills, children will eventually lose their interest in music education.

Dr. Mikowsky's guidance extended even to the finishing touches, like stage deportment and the development of verbal skills for professional interviews and social interactions with people in a position to promote our careers. A broad attitude toward music and culture, with an awareness of all of the arts, was the basis of his approach. I could go on, but I will just conclude by stating that nothing ever escaped his attention that could be of value in any way to his students!

Dr. Inesa Sinkevych

Master of Music, Chicago College of Performing Arts, 2005

Professional Studies, Manhattan School of Music, 2006

Doctor of Musical Arts, Manhattan School of Music, 2010

Associate Piano Teacher, MSM College Division

Member, Piano and Chamber Music faculty, MSM Precollege Division

*Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, Chicago College of Performing Arts, 2002–2005,
Manhattan School of Music, 2005–2010*

25.

In my first lesson with Solomon Mikowsky, he kindly told me that the music I performed should be “warmer” and not so aggressive. In every lesson, from beginning to end, he used this word—“warm”—frequently. The use of this word befits his personality—he is a warm person. I was inspired by his kindness, caring, zeal, and generosity. He always urged us to work hard and encouraged us to achieve confidence in ourselves, as well as a sense of humor—a quality Mr. Mikowsky also possesses and brings to his teaching style.

In Mr. Mikowsky's studio in MSM, there are many pictures of his former students displayed on the walls. I always save the announcements he sends us. His words always urge me to work hard: *“I hope that a few months from now or maybe a year later I will be able to report on some more concerts and competitions. I urge you all to work very hard so that you might be included!”*

Mr. Mikowsky continues to encourage me to continue to explore contemporary music. He wrote to me, “You have played a lot of baroque, classical and romantic music. Try to explore and teach more recent music from many countries. You will make a real contribution and help young Chinese pianists to broaden their knowledge of repertoire.” The year I studied with Mr. Mikowsky was the most unforgettable of my life. I so much appreciate his influence on me.

Chun Wang

Professional Studies, Manhattan School of Music, 2009

Associate Professor of Piano, Music School attached to Central Conservatory of Music (Beijing)

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 2008–2009

26.

Dr. Mikowsky was the first teacher to make me aware of the “extra ingredients” needed to make a performance meaningful and sincere. Surely, every teacher talked to me about being musical and expressive. Solomon Mikowsky was the first one to make me realize that a great performance isn’t simply a successful reiteration of what one plans and prepares in the practice room. It is rather a whole new experience, where spontaneity takes over and the overall impact exceeds the sum of the smaller ingredients.

Until I met Dr. Mikowsky, if I had three concerts in a row with the same program, I felt it was my sole duty to offer three faithful copies of what I had practiced: the more faithful the copy, the more successful the concert. Since working with Dr. Mikowsky, my criteria have completely changed. I have enjoyed much greater success communication with the audience as well as learning to enjoy each performance on my own as it is taking place. His teaching has helped me to open up in many ways, not only as a pianist but as a person. I owe him for provoking some of the most important epiphanies in my life.

Ian Yungwook Yoo

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2003

Professional Studies, Manhattan School of Music, 2004

Professor of piano, Yonsei University (Seoul)

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 2001–2008

27.

In my view, Solomon Mikowsky’s greatest strength as a teacher is his ability to work with different types of students and develop their skills through the individuality of their personal musical styles. He never makes anyone play “his way.” He wants to help you to discover *your* way while gently imprinting his personal touch.

In 1994, I came to New York to study with Dr. Mikowsky in MSM. It was the start of my discovery of the true beauty in music. Following in the steps of my Chinese training, all I wanted up to that moment was to play faster, louder, and with the utmost degree of virtuosity.

Dr. Mikowsky changed my repertoire completely. I unwillingly went from the Prokofieff 7th Piano Sonata to the Mendelssohn Song without Words No. 1, from the Rachmaninoff 3rd Piano Concerto to the Bach Prelude and Fugue in G minor. In a short time, I underwent the transformation from an athlete on the keyboard to a music-lover who appreciates a beautiful sound.

Dr. Mikowsky teaches his students so much more than just music. When I first walked into his studio, I saw a plaque on the wall that said: “Life is like music, what you get depends on how you play it.” What a wonderful way to kick off one’s music study by teaching the connection between music and life! In my seven years of study with him, I witnessed how Dr. Mikowsky treats both life and music with passion, love, and humor, and how he seizes the opportunities of life with great determination!

In recent years, the more successful I am, the more I reminisce about my time as his student. Even though I am only one of many, he will always be the teacher of my life.

Julian Zhiliang Yu

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2001

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 2003

Director, Shanghai International Music School

Director, Herald Music School (NY)

Executive Director, New York International Music Competition

Studied with Solomon Mikowsky, MSM, 1994–2003

28.

It would take a truly eloquent writer to do justice to such a colorful character as Solomon Mikowsky as we know him. That is a task I would never dare to undertake! Nevertheless, I offer just a few thoughts on our teacher.

First, Mr. Mikowsky had a way of teaching each individual student differently; I don’t think he believes in any special method or technique that would fit everyone. What he tries to convey goes beyond mere information. If one has to find a word for it, it would be wisdom, the wisdom known to great artists such as Hofmann, Rachmaninoff, Moiseiwitsch, and Mischa Elman, to name a few—musicians whom Mr. Mikowsky loves and understands deeply. It is, I think, with *that* standard, that Mr. Mikowsky challenges and inspires his pupils as well as himself.

In my freshman year in 1990, Mr. Mikowsky introduced me to the playing of a pianist whose name was then unknown to me: Shura Cherkassky. Later on, after one of many Cherkassky recitals I attended (it was Cherkassky’s 80th birthday recital in 1991), Mr.

Mikowsky and I ran into each other in the lobby of Carnegie Hall. He was beaming with excitement, almost innocently. We smiled at each other briefly without saying a word, and, somehow, I remember that moment as freshly as the recital itself.

Cherkassky's playing became a life-changing experience for me. I really don't want to turn my comments into an essay, but stories about Mr. Mikowsky can happily go on and on.

Ren Zhang

Bachelor of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1994

Master of Music, Manhattan School of Music, 1996

Studied with Dr. Mikowsky, MSM, 1990–1996

APPENDIX 2

STUDENT STATEMENTS

This is my last year at Manhattan School of Music. I would like to thank you for the experience during the past four years. You and your brilliant way of teaching transformed me into a completely new person. I started to look at life differently and realized that music is an abstract painting of the world itself. I will not only remember your professionalism but also you as the most interesting person I have ever met!

Iness Bazayez

--

As I get older, I understand more and more how great you are as a teacher, not just for the period I studied with you, but for a whole lifetime! You are the best example I know of what a great teacher is!

Jenny Chai

--

When I think about the years I studied with you, I realize that I not only learned a lot about the piano, but also about teaching and caring about my own students.

Chin-Chuan Chang

--

An amazing teacher who guides his students to find their own voice, not to copy anyone else. And he is one of the most kind and generous people I ever met. He would do all what he can to help his students. I was very fortunate to have him as a teacher.

Wael Farouk

--

Thank you for your encouragement, patience and excellent teaching. I will always miss working with you.

Sharon Gov

This world is a better place because of people like you!

Yun-Ha Hwang

--

After listening to your speech at the conclusion of my recital, I knew I would never be able to reciprocate with such heartfelt eloquence. My tribute, therefore, will be brief and simple: Thank you for nine years of discovery, for being a formidable teacher and influence in my life and, above all, an unforgettable friend.

Albert Kim

--

You taught me so many things! Not just music!

Kona Kim

--

I have learned so much from you. I am so grateful to have had such a great opportunity. Thank you for your passion, your knowledge, your dedication, your insight, your commitment, your words of wisdom, your encouragement, and most important, your love of music!

Laura Kim

--

How can mere words express the gratitude and respect I have for you? You have taught me not only to become a better pianist but, more importantly, to become a better person.

Paul Kim

--

You are a like a big tree who cares about everything.

Jinmin Lee

--

I will always remember you for your kindness, endless patience and understanding.

Soo-Hyun Lee

You show me that music is Great Love!

Tong-Hua Lim

--

I want to become a teacher like you whose advice can change a student's life.

Jin-Kyung Park

--

You have helped me so much with my sound and technical development. Watching and listening to you play has been an inspiration!

Vera Pawlak

--

When I came to you, my playing was a mess. You showed me what was wrong, started from the beginning and pulled things together. You made the impossible possible!

Cynthia Shaw

--

Thank you for guiding me through an enriching and eye-opening life journey as teacher, friend, and second father for many years.

Yuan Sheng

--

Together we have shared the secrets of the beauty of music. You have given me the best of yourself as a teacher and as a person.

Martin Söderberg

--

It was a pleasure studying with you for five years. I really appreciate all the support you have given me. Thank you for understanding my weak as well as my strong points and encouraging me throughout it all. I am so lucky to have been your student!

Daniel Stroup

In the time I have known you—been your student—a part of me has been born and acknowledged. It would have otherwise remained dormant. Under your influence, I have been able to be more of myself musically than ever before in my life. With you, I feel

such an understanding of things elusive and unspeakable. With your support, the tides, the winds, the songs have become free in me. Thank you so much for being you!

Heidi Upton

--

What you taught me is more than enough for me to write a book.

Fumiko Yokoo

--

I want to express my gratitude for the way you inspired me and changed my approach to music. What I learned from you in only one year will last a lifetime.

Sophie Zhang

APPENDIX 3

PIANISTS AND TEACHERS OF THE PAST

(Compiled by Solomon Mikowsky for listening and reading reference)

ARRAU, Claudio: Chilean, 1903–1991. *B.* Chillán, Chile—*d.* Murzzuschlag, Austria. Pupil of Martin Krause (pupil of Liszt). Classical, broad repertoire. Recommended listening: Beethoven sonatas, concerti.

BACKHAUS, Wilhelm: German, 1884–1969. *B.* Leipzig, Germany—*d.* Villach, Austria. Pupil of Eugen d'Albert (pupil of Liszt). Classical. Recommended listening: Beethoven sonatas.

BARERE, Simon: Ukrainian, 1896–1951. *B.* Odessa, Ukraine (then Russia)—*d.* New York City (during a performance at Carnegie Hall). Pupil of Annette Essipova, Felix Blumenfeld (teacher of Horowitz; thesis Inesa Sinkevych). Virtuoso. Recommended listening: Liszt.

BARTOK, Béla: Hungarian, 1881–1945. *B.* Nagyszentmiklós, Austria-Hungary (now Romania)—*d.* New York City. Teacher of György Sándor. Composer, pianist. Made acoustic recordings of varied repertoire, including his own works.

BAUER, Harold: English, 1873–1951. *B.* London—*d.* Miami. Pupil of Paderewski; began career as violinist. Taught at Manhattan School of Music. Recommended listening: Schumann, Grieg.

BOLET, Jorge: Cuban, 1914–1990. *B.* Havana—*d.* Mountain View, California. Pupil of Godowsky, Hofmann, David Saperton, Moriz Rosenthal. Virtuoso. Recommended recordings: Liszt.

BRAILOWSKY, Alexander: Ukrainian-French, 1896–1976. *B.* Kiev—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Leschetizky, Busoni, Francis Planté. Romantic. Recommended listening: Chopin.

BUSONI, Ferruccio: Italian, 1866–1924. *B.* Empoli (Tuscany)—*d.* Berlin. Pupil of Carl Reinecke; teacher of Petri, Brailowsky, Rudolph Ganz. Intellectual, composer, arranger. Few acoustic recordings and piano rolls.

CASADESUS, Robert: French, 1899–1972. *B.* Paris—*d.* Paris. Pupil of Louis Diémer; teacher of Claude Helffer, Grant Johannesen, Monique Haas. Elegant. Recommended listening: Ravel and Mozart concerti, Debussy Preludes.

CASELLA, Alfredo: Italian, 1883–1947. *B.* Turin—*d.* Rome. Pupil of Louis Diémer; teacher of Maria Curcio, Maria Tipo. Intellectual, composer, conductor, editor.

CHERKASSKY, Shura: Ukrainian, 1909–1995. *B.* Odessa—*d.* London. Pupil of Lydia Cherkassky (his mother), Josef Hofmann. “Golden Age.” Recommended listening: live recordings.

CIAMPI, Marcel—French, 1891–1980. *B.* Paris—*d.* Paris. Pupil of Louis Diémer, Debussy, Cortot, Perlemuter, Lazare Lévy; teacher of Hepzibah and Yaltah Menuhin, Cecile Ousset, Nancy Bricard, Eric Heidsieck. Recorded Bach.

CORTOT, Alfred—Swiss, 1877–1962. *B.* Nyon—*d.* Lausanne. Pupil of Émile Descombes (pupil of Chopin?), Louis Diémer; teacher of Haskil, Lipatti, Yvonne Lefébure, Vlado Perlemuter, Samson François, Esteban Sánchez; “Golden Age” intellectual. Recommended listening: Chopin, Schumann, Debussy.

CURCIO, Maria—Italian, 1918(-19?)–2009. *B.* Naples—*d.* Porto (Portugal). Pupil of Casella, Carlo Zecchi (pupil of Artur Schnabel) and subsequently Schnabel (she was his last pupil); teacher of Argerich, Lupu, Mitsuko Uchida, Leon Fleisher, Geoffrey Tozer and Simone Dinnerstein.

CURZON, Clifford—English, 1907–1982. *B.* London—*d.* Patterdale (England). Pupil of Schnabel, Landowska, Boulanger; Classical/early Romantic specialist. Recommended listening: Schubert.

CZIFFRA, George (György)—Hungarian (French citizen), 1921–1994. *B.* Budapest—*d.* Senlis (France). Pupil of István Thomán (pupil of Liszt and teacher of Bartók and Dohnányi). Virtuoso. Recommended listening: Liszt.

DIÉMER, Louis—French, 1843–1919. *B.* Paris—*d.* Paris. Pupil of Marmontel (teacher of Ignacio Cervantes; thesis Solomon Mikowsky); teacher of Rislér, Cortot, Levy, Casella, Yves Nat, Ciampi, Casadesus. Early Gramophone recordings of Chopin.

DOHNANYI, Ernő—Hungarian, 1877–1960. *B.* Pozsony, Austria-Hungary (now Bratislava)—*d.* New York City. Pupil of István Thomán, Eugene d’Albert; composer, conductor, pianist; teacher of Annie Fischer, Edward Kileny, Laslo Halasz, Ernő Szégedi, Béla Bartók. Made acoustic recordings of varied repertoire, including his own works.

FISCHER, Annie—Hungarian, 1914–1995. *B.* Budapest—*d.* Budapest. Pupil of Dohnányi. Recommended listening: all recordings.

FISCHER, Edwin; Swiss, 1886–1960. *B.* Basel—*d.* Zürich. Pupil of Martin Krause; teacher of Brendel, Demus, Badura-Skoda, Barenboim, Sequeira Costa. Bach, Classical, intellectual. Recommended listening: Bach WTC, Brahms Concerto No. 2 (Furtwängler).

FOSTER, Sidney—American, 1917–1977. *B.* South Carolina—*d.* USA (?). Pupil of

Vengerova and Saperton; teacher of Hans Boepple, Thomas Mastroianni, Benita Meshulam, Veda Zuponic, Carlisle Floyd (composer).

FRIEDBERG, Carl—German, 1872–1955. *B.* Bingen—*d.* Merano (Italy). Pupil of Clara Schumann, Brahms; teacher of Malcolm Frager, Bruce Hungerford, William Masselos.

FRIEDMAN, Ignaz—Polish, 1882–1948. *B.* Podgórze—*d.* Sydney (Australia). Pupil of Hugo Riemann, Leschetizky; teacher of Ignaz Tiegerman, Bruce Hungerford. “Golden Age.” Recommended listening: Chopin, Mendelssohn.

GABRILOWITSCH, Ossip—Russian, 1878–1936. *B.* St. Petersburg—*d.* Detroit (Michigan). Pupil of Anton Rubinstein, Leschetizky. Conductor, Detroit Symphony. “Golden Age.” Recommended listening: acoustic recordings of Schumann (solo and chamber music); piano rolls.

GANZ, Rudolph—Swiss, 1877–1972. *B.* Zürich—*d.* Chicago. Pupil of Busoni; taught at Chicago Musical College (Chicago College of Performing Arts). Conductor, St. Louis Symphony. Recommended listening: MacDowell (championed his compositions).

GIESEKING, Walter—German (French-born), 1895–1956. *B.* Lyon—*d.* London. Pupil of Karl Leimer (co-authored book on piano technique); teacher of Marian Filar, Werner Haas, Stewart Gordon. Mikowsky attended his last concert in New York. French, broad. Recommended listening: Debussy, Ravel, Mozart.

GILELS, Emil—Ukrainian, 1916–1985. *B.* Odessa—*d.* Moscow. Pupil of Yakov Tkach (pupil of Raoul Pugno), Heinrich Neuhaus (pupil of Blumenfeld and Michalowski, who was a pupil of Mikuli, who was a pupil of Chopin). Romantic, broad. Mikowsky attended his New York debut in Carnegie Hall performing the Tchaikovsky Concerto No. 1. Recommended listening: Beethoven concerti, Russian repertoire.

GINZBURG, Grigory—Russian, 1904–1961. *B.* Nizhny Novgorod—*d.* Moscow. Pupil of Goldenweiser; teacher of Sergei Dorensky. Arrangements (*e.g.*, Scherzo from Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 6). Romantic virtuoso. Recommended listening: Liszt, Chopin, Medtner.

GODOWSKY, Leopold—Lithuanian, 1870–1938. *B.* Zaslai (now Lithuania)—*d.* New York City. Self-taught. 53 Transcriptions of Chopin Études; polyphonic transcriptions. “Golden Age,” intellectual. Recommended listening: Grieg Ballade.

GOLDENWEISER, Alexander—Russian, 1875–1961. *B.* Kishinev—*d.* Moscow. Pupil of Safonoff; teacher of Ginzburg, Berman, Feinberg, Kabalevsky, Petrov, Kapustin, Nikolayeva, Paperno. Recommended listening: Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Medtner.

GOLDSAND, Robert—Austrian, 1911–1991. *B.* Vienna—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Sauer, Rosenthal; teacher at Manhattan School of Music of Harris Goldsmith, Thomas Schumacher, Ralph Votapek, Ann Koscielny. “Golden Age.” Recommended listening:

live recordings.

GORODNITZKI, Sascha—Ukrainian, 1905–1986. *B.* Kiev—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Percy Goetschius, Rubin Goldmark, Josef Lhévinne; teacher of Garrick Ohlsson, Herbert Rogers, Daniel Kunin, Solomon Mikowsky, Armenta Adams, Nelita True, Miyoko Lotto, Albert Lotto, David Kaiserman, Natalie Ryshna, William Cheadle, Bela Szilagy. Romantic virtuoso, broad. Recommended listening: Beethoven, Brahms, various.

GOULD, Glenn—Canadian, 1932–1982. *B.* Toronto—*d.* Toronto. Pupil of Alberto Guerrero. Bach, eccentric, intellectual. Recommended listening: Bach.

HASKIL, Clara—Romanian, 1895–1960. *B.* Bucharest—*d.* Brussels. Pupil of Richard Robert (teacher of Serkin), Busoni, Cortot; Poetic. Recommended listening: Scarlatti, Mozart, Schumann (*esp.* Abegg Variations).

HESS, Myra—English, 1890–1965. *B.* London—*d.* London. Pupil of Tobias Matthay; teacher of Stephen Bishop-Kovacevich, Richard and John Contiguglia. Broad. Recommended listening: Beethoven, Mozart, Schumann.

HOFMANN, Josef—Polish, 1876–1957. *B.* Podgórze—*d.* Los Angeles. Pupil of Moritz Moszkowski, Anton Rubinstein; teacher of Abram Chasins, Abbey Simon, Shura Cherkassky, Nadia Reisenberg. “Golden Age” virtuoso. Recommended listening: acoustic recordings of Chopin; salon transcriptions; Metropolitan Opera recital (1938).

HOROWITZ, Vladimir—Ukrainian, 1903–1989. *B.* Kiev—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Puchalsky, Tarnowsky and Blumenfeld; teacher of Byron Janis, Coleman Blumfield, Ronald Turini, Alexander Fiorillo, Ivan Davis, Murray Perahia, Eduardus Halim and Dan-Wen Wei. Romantic virtuoso. Recommended listening: all recordings.

HUTCHESON, Ernest—Australian, 1871–1951. *B.* Melbourne—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Carl Reinecke and Bernhard Stavenhagen (pupil of Liszt); teacher of Abram Chasins, Bruce Hungerford, Helen Scovill, Frances Hall Ballard. Recommended listening: MacDowell 2nd Concerto.

KADOSA, Pál—Hungarian, 1903–1983. *B.* Léva—*d.* Budapest. Pupil of Zoltán Székely and Zoltán Kodály; teacher of György Ligeti, György Kurtág, Arpad Joo, Andras Schiff, Zoltán Kocsis, Deszo Ránki, Jenő Jandó.

KAPELL, William—American, 1922–1953. *B.* New York City—*d.* Kings Mountain air crash (California). Pupil of Samaroff. Romantic virtuoso. Recommended listening: Liszt Mephisto Waltz No. 1; various.

KATCHEN, Julius—American, 1926–1969 Paris). *B.* Long Branch (New Jersey)—*d.* Paris. Pupil of Mr. & Mrs. Svet (grandparents). Broad. Recommended listening: Brahms.

KEMPF, Wilhelm—German, 1895–1991. *B.* Jüterbog—*d.* Positano (Italy). Pupil of Karl Heinrich Barth (teacher of Artur Rubinstein); teacher of Oppitz, O’Conor, Demus, Uchida, Shetler, Biret. Classical, lyrical. Recommended listening: Beethoven and Schubert sonatas.

LANDOWSKA, Wanda—Polish, 1877–1959. *B.* Warsaw—*d.* Lakeville (Connecticut). Pupil of Jan Kleczyński, Aleksander Michalowski. Harpsichordist; Baroque musicologist. Recommended listening: Bach.

LARROCHA, Alicia de—Spanish, 1923–2009. *B.* Barcelona—*d.* Barcelona. Pupil of Frank Marshall; teacher of Sonia Bach, Adam Kent (pupil of Mikowsky). Spanish, classical, broad. Recommended listening: Spanish and French repertoire; Mozart.

LESCHETIZKY, Theodor—Polish, 1830–1915. *B.* Łańcut—*d.* Dresden. Pupil of Carl Czerny; teacher of Essipova (second of his four wives), Friedman, Paderewski, Schnabel, Brailowsky, Moiseiwitsch, Horszowski. Famous pedagogue.

LEVITZKI, Mischa—Ukrainian, 1898–1941. *B.* Kremenchuk—*d.* Avon-by-the-Sea (New Jersey). Pupil of Michalowski, Zygmunt Stojowski, Dohnányi. “Golden Age.” Wrote a famous waltz.

LÉVY, Lazare—French, 1882–1964. *B.* Brussels—*d.* Paris. Pupil of Diémer; teacher of Monique Haas, John Cage, Marcel Dupré, Lukas Foss, Solomon, André Tchaikovsky, Clara Haskil, Kazimierz Serocki, Michel Plasson. Famous pedagogue; few recordings.

LHÉVINNE, Josef—Russian, 1874–1944 (New York). *B.* Oryol—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Vassily Safonov (pupil of Leschetizky; also teacher of Scriabin and Medtner); teacher of Gorodnitzki (teacher of Mikowsky *et al.*). “Golden Age.” Elegant virtuoso. Recommended recordings: Schulz-Evler “Blue Danube”; Chopin Études.

LIPATTI, Dinu—Romanian, 1917–1950. *B.* Bucharest—*d.* Geneva. Pupil of Florica Musicescu, Cortot, Boulanger. Poetic virtuoso. Recommended listening: Bach Partita No. 1; Chopin waltzes; Schumann and Grieg concerti; Ravel *Alborada del Gracioso*.

LONG, Marguerite—French, 1874–1966. *B.* Nîmes—*d.* Paris. Pupil of Henry Fissot, Marmontel; teacher of Février, François, Tacchino, Doyen, Duphil, Jeanne-Marie Darré. Recommended listening: Ravel Concerto in G (dedicated to her).

MARMONTEL, Antoine François—French, 1816–1898. *B.* Clermont-Ferrand—*d.* Paris. Teacher of Bizet, Debussy, d’Indy, MacDowell, Pierné, Diémer, Planté, Ignacio Cervantes (biography by Solomon Mikowsky).

MATTHAY, Tobias—English, 1858–1945. *B.* London—*d.* Haslemere. Pupil of Sterndale Bennett; teacher of York Bowen, Myra Hess, Clifford Curzon, Moura Lympny, Harriet Cohen.

MICHELANGELI, Arturo Benedetti—Italian, 1920–1995. *B.* Brescia—*d.* Lugano (Switzerland). Teacher of Argerich, Moravec, Pollini. Cool, aristocratic virtuoso. Mikowsky attended his last concert in New York. Recommended listening: Ravel Concerto in G; Rachmaninoff Concerto No. 4; Schumann Carnival Jest in Vienna, Op. 26; Debussy Preludes.

MIKULI, Karol—Armenian-Polish, 1821–1897. *B.* Czerniowce (now Chernivtsi, Ukraine)—*d.* Lemberg (now Lviv). Pupil of Chopin (was his assistant); teacher of Moriz Rosenthal, Raoul Koczalski, Aleksander Michalowski. Edited Chopin's works.

MOISEIWITSCH, Benno—Ukrainian (British subject), 1890–1963. *B.* Odessa—*d.* London. Pupil of Leschetizky. “Golden Age.” Mikowsky attended his last concert in New York where he played Rachmaninoff's concerti Nos. 1 and 2 as well as the Paganini Rhapsody. Recommended listening: Chopin Ballade No. 4; Rachmaninoff Rhapsody; various.

MOSZKOWSKI, Moritz—German (Polish background), 1854–1925. *B.* Breslau—*d.* New York City. Played for Liszt; teacher of Frank Damrosch, Joaquín Nín (teacher of Sentenat, Mikowsky's teacher), Joaquín Turina, Vlado Perlemuter, Thomas Beecham, Josef Hofmann, Wanda Landowska. Virtuoso and composer of études, salon pieces.

MOTTA, José Vianna da—Portuguese, 1868–1948. *B.* São Tomé Island—*d.* Lisbon. Pupil of Xaver Scharwenka, Hans von Bülow, Liszt; teacher of Sequeira Costa. Performed all Beethoven sonatas. Recommended listening: Liszt *Totentanz*.

NAT, Yves—French, 1890–1956. *B.* Béziers—*d.* Ile-de-France. Pupil of Diémer; Teacher of Jörg Demus, Santos Ojeda, Genevieve Joy, Lucette Descaves, Jean-Bernard Pommier, Pierre Sancan, Ernest Ulmer. Recorded all Beethoven sonatas.

NEUHAUS, Heinrich—Ukrainian (German background), 1884–1964. *B.* Elisavetgrad (now Kirovohrad)—*d.* Moscow. Pupil of Blumenfeld, Michalowsky, Godowsky; teacher of Yakov Zak, Sviatoslav Richter, Emil Gilels, Yevgeny Malinin, Lev Naumov, Vera Gornostaeva, Igor Zhukov, Valery Kastelsky. Recommended listening: Chopin Concerto No. 1.

NÍN, Joaquín—Cuban (Spanish-Catalán background), 1879–1949 (Havana). *B.* Havana—*d.* Havana. Pupil of Moszkowski; teacher of César Pérez Sentenat (teacher of Mikowsky). Pianist, editor, composer.

NOVAES, Guiomar—Brazilian, 1895–1979. *B.* São João da Boa Vista—*d.* São Paulo. Studied with Isidor Philipp. Lyrical. Recommended listening: Chopin.

PACHMANN, Vladimir de—Ukrainian, 1848–1933. *B.* Odessa—*d.* Rome. Studied with Josef Dachs (pupil of Tausig). Eccentric. Recommended listening: Chopin (mostly piano rolls).

PADEREWSKI, Ignacy Jan—Polish, 1860–1941. *B.* Kurilovka—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Leschetizky; teacher of Witold Malcuzyinski. Romantic virtuoso. Recommended listening: early recordings.

PERLEMUTER, Vlado—Lithuanian-French, 1904–2002. *B.* Kovno—*d.* Paris. Pupil of Moszkowski, Cortot, Ravel; teacher of Marcel Ciampi, Christian Zacharias, Jacques Rouvier, Michel Dalberto, Carter Larsen, Joaquin Soriano, Carlos Cebro. Recommended listening: Ravel, Chopin.

PETRI, Egon—German (Dutch background), 1881–1962. *B.* Hanover—*d.* Berkeley (California). Pupil of Busoni; teacher of Victor Borge, Gunnar Johannsen, Vitya Vronsky, Earl Wild, Ozan Marsh, John Ogden. Powerful. Recommended listening: Bach, Liszt, Tchaikovsky Concerto No. 1.

PHILIPP, Isidor—Hungarian-French, 1863–1958. *B.* Budapest—*d.* Paris. Pupil of George Mathias (pupil of Chopin and Kalkbrenner), Saint-Saëns, Stephen Heller (pupil of Czerny), Theodore Ritter (pupil of Liszt); teacher of Aaron Copland, Jeanne-Marie Darré, Pierre Dervaux, Jean Françaix, Fernando Laires, Yvonne Loriod, Nikita Magaloff, Federico Mompou, Albert Schweitzer, Guiomar Novaes, Wilfrid Pelletier, Alexander Tcherepnin, Louise Talma, Soulima Stravinsky, Beveridge Webster.

RACHMANINOFF, Sergei—Russian, 1873–1943. *B.* Semyonovo—*d.* Beverly Hills. Pupil of Nikolai Zverev, Alexander Siloti (pupil of Liszt). “Golden Age” virtuoso; composer. Recommended listening: Schumann Carnival; Chopin Sonata No. 2; collaborations with Fritz Kreisler; his own works.

REISENBERG, Nadia—Lithuanian, 1904–1983. *B.* Vilnius—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Nikolaev, Josef Hofmann; teacher of Victoria Bond, Raymond Erickson, Richard Goode, Mel Powell, Bella Shumiatcher, Ilana Vered. Recommended listening: Chopin.

RICHTER, Sviatoslav—Ukrainian (German background), 1915–1997. *B.* Zhytomyr—*d.* Moscow. Pupil of Neuhaus. Eccentric virtuoso. Recommended listening: all recordings.

ROSENTHAL, Moriz—Polish, 1862–1946. *B.* Lemberg (now Lviv)—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Mikuli (pupil of Chopin), Joseffy (pupil of Liszt); teacher of Charles Rosen, Robert Goldsand (former Manhattan School of Music piano faculty). Made some acoustic recordings and piano rolls.

RUBINSTEIN, Anton—Russian, 1830–1894. *B.* Vikhvatnets—*d.* Peterhof. Studied with his mother and with Alexander Villoing (pupil of Albrechtsberger). Founded St. Petersburg Conservatory. Romantic-age virtuoso (was compared to Liszt), composer.

RUBINSTEIN, Artur—Polish, 1887–1982. *B.* Łódź —*d.* Geneva. Pupil of Karl Heinrich Barth; teacher of Dubravka Tomsic, François-René Duchable, Ann Schein, Eugene Indjic, Marc Laforet. Romantic. Recommended listening: Brahms, Chopin.

SAFONOV, Vassily—Russian, 1852–1918. *B.* Itschory—*d.* Kislovodsk. Pupil of Leschetitzky; teacher of Scriabin, Josef Lhévinne (teacher of Gorodnitzki), Medtner. Pianist, conductor.

SAMAROFF, Olga—American (*née* Lucy Hickenlooper), 1882–1948. *B.* San Antonio (Texas)—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Marmontel; teacher of William Kapell, Rosalyn Tureck, Eugene List, Claudette Sorel, Vincent Persichetti (composition teacher of Mikowsky), Stewart Gordon, Natalie Hinderas, Joseph Battista, Bruce Hungerford, Jaime Ingram, Raymond Lewenthal, Jerome Lowenthal, Alexis Weissenberg.

SAMUEL, Harold—English, 1879–1951. *B.* London—*d.* London. Pupil of Edward Dannreuther and Charles Villiers Stanford (composition). Teacher of early music scholar Howard Ferguson. Pioneered Bach keyboard works to British audiences, introduced *Goldberg Variations* which were almost unknown in London. Recommended listening: Bach.

SÁNDOR, György—Hungarian, 1912–2005. *B.* Budapest—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Bartók and Kodály; teacher of Hélène Grimaud, György Sebok, Christina Kiss, Barbara Nissman, Ian Pace, Jungwon Jin, Malcolm Bilson.

SAUER, Emil von—German, 1862–1942. *B.* Hamburg—*d.* Vienna. Pupil of Ludwig Deppe, Nicholas Rubinstein, Liszt (two summers); teacher of Webster Aiken, Stefan Askenase, Maryla Jonas, Angelica Morales (married her). Lyrical. Edited Brahms and Liszt piano works. Recommended listening: all recordings.

SCHNABEL, Artur—Austrian, 1882–1951. *B.* Blah—*d.* Blah. Pupil of Leschetitzky and Essipova (wife, assistant); teacher of Clifford Curzon, Rudolf Firkusny, Lili Kraus, Carlo Zecchi, Leonard Shure, Leon Fleisher, Maria Curcio, Claude Frank. Classical, lyrical. Recommended listening: Beethoven sonatas, Schubert.

SEIDLHOFER, Bruno—Austrian, 1905–1982. *B.* Vienna—*d.* Vienna. Pupil of Franz Schmidt, Alban Berg; teacher of Martha Argerich, Friedrich Gulda, Rudolf Buchbinder, Arnaldo Cohen, Nelson Freire, Jaime Ingram, Daniel Pollack.

SELVA, Blanche—French (Spanish-Catalan background), 1884–1942. *B.* Brive-la-Gaillarde—*d.* Saint-Amant-Tallende. Pupil of Duvernoy, d'Indy. Premiered *Iberia* by Albéniz. Teacher, author.

SENTENAT, César Pérez—Cuban, 1896–1973. *B.* Havana—*d.* Havana. Pupil of Hubert de Blanck and Joaquín Nín in Paris (pupil of Moszkowski); teacher of Horacio Gutierrez, Josefina Megret, Santos Ojeda, Solomon Mikowsky, Marco Rizo, Juana Zayas.

SERKIN, Rudolf—Czech (Bohemian; Russian-Jewish background), 1903–1991. *B.* Eger, Bohemia (now Cheb, Czech Republic)—*d.* Guilford (Vermont). Pupil of Richard Robert. Pianist, teacher. Classical, broad. Recommended listening: all recordings, *esp.* Beethoven.

SHURE, Leonard—American, 1910–1995. *B.* Los Angeles—*d.* Nantucket. Pupil of Artur Schnabel (only teaching assistant to Schnabel); teacher of Ursula Oppens, Gilbert Kalish, composer/pianist David del Tredici, pianist/critic Anthony Tommasini.

SILOTI, Alexander—Russian, 1863–1945. *B.* Kharkiv—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Nikolai Zverev, Nikolai Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky (composition), Franz Liszt; teacher of Alexander Goldenweiser, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Eugene Istomin. Pianist, conductor, transcriber. Limited recordings available.

SOLOMON (Cutner)—English, 1902–1988. *B.* London—*d.* London. Pupil of Mathilde Verne (pupil of Clara Schumann). Classical. Recommended listening: Beethoven sonatas, Brahms-Handel Variations.

SEBŐK, György—Hungarian, 1922–1999. *B.* Szeged—*d.* Bloomington (Indiana). Pupil of Zoltan Kodály and Leo Weiner at the Franz Liszt Academy; teacher of Tamás Ungar, Yong-Hi Moon. Recommended listening/viewing: YouTube master class.

STEUERMANN, Eduard—Ukrainian, 1892–1964. *B.* Sambor—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Vilém Kurzland and Ferruccio Busoni, composition with Humperdinck and Schoenberg; teacher of Alfred Brendel, Jakob Gimpel, Moura Lympany, Avraham Sternklar. Recommended listening: Schoenberg complete piano works.

TIPO, Maria—Italian, *b.* 1931. *B.* Naples. Pupil of Ersilia Cavallo (her mother, pupil of Busoni), Casella, Guido Agosti. Recommended listening: Scarlatti.

TURECK, Rosalyn—American, 1914–2003. *B.* Chicago—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Leon Theremin, Gavin Williamson, Olga Samaroff; teacher of Yuan Sheng. Bach specialist; credited by Glenn Gould as main influence. Recommended listening: Bach.

VENGEROVA, Isabelle; Belarusian, 1877–1956. *B.* Minsk (now Belarus)—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Josef Dachs, Leschetizky; teacher of Samuel Barber, Leonard Bernstein, Lukas Foss, Nicolas Slonimsky, Anthony di Bonaventura, Gary Graffman, Teresa Escandón, Lillian Kallir, Abbey Simon, Gilbert Kalish, Jacob Lateiner, Leonard Pennario, Judit Jaimes, Stanley Babin.

VIÑES, Ricardo—Spanish, 1875–1943. *B.* Lleida—*d.* Barcelona. Pupil of Bériot; teacher of Poulenc. Premiered works by Debussy, Ravel, Albéniz, Falla, many dedicated to him. Recommended listening: French and Spanish music (compare with de Larrocha).

WILD, Earl—American, 1915–2010. *B.* Pittsburgh—*d.* Palm Springs. Pupil of Marguerite Long, Petri, Helene Barere; taught at Manhattan School of Music. Romantic virtuoso, transcriber. Recommended listening: concerti; his own transcriptions.

WITTGENSTEIN, Paul—Austria, 1887–1961. *B.* Vienna—*d.* New York City. Pupil of Malvine Brée, Leschetizky. Lost right hand in World War I; Commissioned Britten, Hindemith, Tansman, Korngold, Strauss, Prokofieff, and Ravel to write music for him.

Authored many left-hand arrangements of repertoire. Recommended listening: Ravel *Concerto for the Left Hand* (made changes that infuriated Ravel).

YESSIPOVA, Anna—Russian, 1851–1914. *B.* St. Petersburg—*d.* St. Petersburg. Pupil and second wife of Leschetizky; Teacher of Prokofieff, Sergei Tarnowsky, Maria Yudina, Isabella Vengerova, Alexander Borovsky.

ZAK, Yakov—Ukrainian, 1913–1976. *B.* Odessa—*d.* Moscow. Pupil of Maria Statkhova, Neuhaus; teacher of Petrov, Mogilevsky, Egorov.

APPENDIX 4

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS

Solomon Mikowsky
mikowsky@hotmail.com
www.solomonmikowsky.com

Solomon Mikowsky was born in Cuba of Russian-Polish parentage. His early training was with César Pérez Sentenat, who had studied in Paris with Joaquín Nin, a pupil of Moszkowski, himself a pupil of Liszt. He was later granted scholarships by the Cuban government and the Juilliard School to continue his studies in New York with Sascha Gorodnitzki, the foremost pupil of the legendary Russian virtuoso Josef Lhévinne, receiving bachelor's and master's degrees from Juilliard and a doctorate from Columbia University.

Mikowsky's students have won over 150 international piano competitions including the Rubinstein in Tel Aviv (three winners including First Prize), Tchaikovsky and Sviatoslav Richter in Moscow, Van Cliburn (Special Award), Beethoven in Bonn (First Prize), Schumann in Leipzig (First Prize), Dublin, Vianna da Motta (two winners), Porto (two winners), Andorra (four winners including two First Prizes), China International Competition (two winners), Panama (nine winners including three First Prizes), Viña del Mar in Chile, Montreal (two winners), Cleveland, New Orleans (First Prize), Naumburg, Minnesota E-Competition (two winners), Hilton Head, World Competition in Cincinnati (three winners including First Prize), Chopin Kosciuszko in New York (ten winners including eight First Prizes), and more than twenty-five First Prize winners of the Manhattan School of Music Concerto Competitions.

They have also won many competitions in Spain, including the Santander (First Prize), Maria Canals in Barcelona (eight winners including three First Prizes), Iturbi in Valencia (four winners including two First Prizes), Jaén (six winners including First Prize), Pilar Bayona in Zaragoza (five winners including First Prize), Guerrero in Madrid (three winners including First Prize) and Carlet (four First Prize winners). Mikowsky's students have also been recipients of the prestigious Gilmore Artist Award (\$300,000) and the Avery Fisher Artist Career Grant.

Mikowsky's students have performed as soloists with the Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Minnesota, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Berlin, Budapest, Frankfurt, Jerusalem, Munich, St. Petersburg, and Tokyo Symphony orchestras; the BBC, Berlin, Dresden, London (Royal), Moscow, New York, Rotterdam, and Israel Philharmonic orchestras; the Zürich Tonhalle; the Dresden Staatskapelle Orchestra and the national orchestras of Finland, France, Mexico, and the Czech Republic, with such noted conductors as Comissiona, Dudamel, Dutoit, Ehrling, Eschenbach, Fischer, Frübeck de Burgos, Gielen, Graf, Herbig, Macal, Masur, Semkow, Skrowaczewski, and Zinman.

Mikowsky is regularly invited to serve on the juries of some of the most important international piano competitions. He has given master classes at the leading conservatories in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, Krakow, Budapest, Salzburg, London, Paris, Rotterdam, Madrid, Valencia, Istanbul, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and throughout Australia and the Far East. A Steinway Artist, he participated early on in festivals in France, Italy, Spain, Korea, and Taiwan. During the summers, he directs his International Piano Festivals which consist of piano courses in various countries in Europe and Asia, and the participation of his piano students as performers in numerous recitals.

Mikowsky has published a book on nineteenth-century Cuban music, has contributed to *Américas*, the *Organization of American States Journal* and has been featured in interviews in *Clavier* (USA), *Chopin* (Japan), *Piano Artistry* (China), *Sur Exprès* (Spain) and *Musica di Pianoforte* (Korea). In recognition of his pedagogical contribution, Solomon Mikowsky has been awarded the Cintas Prize by the Institute of International Education.

Solomon Mikowsky has been called “one of the world’s most sought-after artist teachers” (*Clavier*), with “a magical ability to develop his piano students into artists” (*Sur Exprès*). Included in Benjamin Saver’s *The Most Wanted Piano Teachers in the USA*, he has been a member of the piano faculty at Manhattan School of Music in New York for over forty years and is recipient of the school’s Presidential Medal. He was also a member of the Artist Faculty at Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University for eleven years.

APPENDIX 5

STUDENTS OF SOLOMON MIKOWSKY
COMPETITION LAUREATES

(197 as of June 2011)

Albacete (Spain)

1st Prize Aboli, Penélope (Spain)

Alicia de Larrocha Prize (Andorra)

Recipient Hong, Kookhee (Korea)

AMSA (Cincinnati)

1st Prize..... Alamo, Ana Karina (Venezuela)

Andorra (Spain)

1st Prize..... Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)1st Prize..... Moutouzquine, Alexander (Russia)2nd Prize..... Namirovsky, Michael (Israel)

Art Livre International Competition (Brazil)

1st Prize..... Alamo, Ana Karina (Venezuela)

Arthur Rubinstein (Tel Aviv)

1st Prize..... Gerstein, Kirill (Russia)5th Prize Moutouzquine, Alexander (Russia)6th Prize Sinkevych, Inesa (Ukraine/Israel)

Artists International (New York)

Recipients..... Kim, Chungwon (Korea)

Kim, Jae-Hee (Korea)

Kwon, Sumi (Korea)

Lu, Chia-Hui (Taiwan)

You, Xi (China)

Ataulfo Argenta (Spain)

Recipient Méndez, José Ramón (Spain)

Augusta Symphony (Georgia)

2nd Prize..... Kim, Youngho (Korea)

Avery Fisher Artist Career Grant (USA)

Recipient Gerstein, Kirill

Beethoven (Bonn)

1st Prize..... Yoo, Ian Yungwook (Korea)

Bergen Philharmonic (New Jersey)

1st Prize..... Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)

Bloomingdale Symphony (New York)

1st Prize..... Hung, Chi-Yung (Taiwan)

Caltanissetta (Italy)

2nd Prize..... Pérez-Molina Duo (Spain)

Carlet (Spain)

1st Prize..... Anikushin, Maxim (Russia)

1st Prize..... Aboli, Penélope (Spain)

1st Prize..... Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)

1st Prize..... Hong, Kookhee (Korea)

1st Prize..... Neeman, Edward (Australia/USA)

Cherkassky Award, Artists International (New York)

Recipient Zhang, Ren (China)

China International Competition (Beijing)

2nd Prize..... Yuan Sheng (China)

China International Competition (Beijing)

3rd Prize Moutouzkyne, Alexander (Russia)

Chopin Competition, Columbia University (New York)

1st Prize..... Kosmiejka, Adam (Poland)

Chopin Prize, Kosciuszko Foundation (New York)

Recipient Floril, Jonathan (Ecuador)

Cleveland (USA)

3rd Prize Moutouzkyne, Alexander (Russia)

Denver Symphony (CO)

3rd Prize Brewster-Franzetti, Allison (USA)

Dublin (Ireland)

3rd Prize Gerstein, Kirill (Russia)

Finale Ligure (Italy)

1st Prize..... Pérez-Molina Duo (Spain)

Fischhoff Prize (Chamber Music), USA

Recipient Bruser, Jessica (Canada)

Five Towns Competition (New York)

1st Prize..... Alamo, Ana Karina (Venezuela)

3rd Prize..... Cai, Yi Min (China)

3rd Prize..... Zhai, Weiwei (China)

Francis Poulenc (France)

2nd Prize..... Wang, Jingjing (China)

Gilmore Artist Award (\$300,000, USA)

Recipient Gerstein, Kirill (Russia)

Gilmore Young Artist Award (USA)

Recipient Gerstein, Kirill (Russia)

Gina Bachauer (UT)

3rd Prize..... Floril, Jonathan (Ecuador)

Giovani Pianisti (Italy)

1st Prize..... Alamo, Ana Karina (Venezuela)

Grammy Award

Nominee..... Brewster-Franzetti, Allison (USA)

Great Neck (NY)

1st Prize..... Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)

Guerrero (Madrid)

1st Prize..... Moutouzkine, Alexander (Russia)

2nd Prize..... Akagi, Yukiko (Japan)

2nd Prize..... Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)

2nd Prize..... Méndez, José Ramón (Spain)

Gyeongnam (Korea)

4th Prize Moutouzkine, Alexander (Russia)

Haddonfield Symphony (NJ)

1st Prize..... Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)

Hartford Symphony (CT)

1st Prize..... Kim, Albert (USA)

Heida Hermanns (CT)

Recipient Méndez, José Ramón

Helen Hart (KY)

1st Prize..... Kim, Youngho (Korea)

Hilton Head (NY)

Recipient Méndez, José Ramón

Houston Symphony (TX)

1st Prize..... Fomina, Maria (Russia)

Ibiza (Spain)

1st Prize..... Alamo, Ana Karina (Venezuela)

1st Prize..... Melikian, Sofia (Armenia)

Ibla (Italy)

2nd Prize..... Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)

Ima Hogg (USA)

1st Prize..... Fomina, Maria (Russia)

Infanta Cristina (Madrid)

1st Prize..... Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)

2nd Prize..... Floril, Jonathan (Ecuador)

Ignacio Cervantes (Havana)

1st Prize..... Sheng, Yuan (China)

2nd Prize..... Moutouzquine, Alexander (Russia)

Jaén (Spain)

1st Prize..... Sinkevych, Inesa (Ukraine/Israel)

2nd Prize..... Sheng, Yuan (China)

3rd Prize Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)

3rd Prize Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)

3rd Prize Lee, Jung-Eun (Korea)

3rd Prize Wang, Jingjing (China)

Joaquín Rodrigo (Madrid)

1st Prize..... Neeman, Edward (Australia/USA)

3rd Prize Akagi, Yukiko (Japan)

José Iturbi (Valencia)

1st Prize..... Arrieta, Rowena (Philippines)

1st Prize..... Moutouzquine, Alexander (Russia)

3rd Prize Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)

- 4th Prize Melikian, Sofia (Armenia)
- José Roca (Valencia)
 1st Prize..... Akagi, Yukiko (Japan)
 3rd Prize Neeman, Edward (Australia/USA)
- Junior Missouri-Southern (USA)
 1st Prize..... Kim, Albert (USA)
- Kankakee Concerto Competition (USA)
 Winner..... Wang, Jingjing (China)
- Kosciuszko Chopin (New York)
 1st Prize..... Floril, Jonathan (Ecuador)
 1st Prize..... Gerstein, Kirill (Russia)
 1st Prize..... Han, Xu (China)
 1st Prize..... Kent, Adam (USA0)
 1st Prize..... Kim, Youngho (Korea)
 1st Prize..... Namirovsky, Michael (Israel)
 2nd Prize..... Yoo, Ian Yungwook (Korea)
 3rd Prize Brewster-Franzetti, Allison (USA)
 ?..... Méndez, José Ramón (Spain)
 ?..... Shorr, Aaron (USA)
- Manresa (Spain)
 Winner..... Méndez, José Ramón (Spain)
- María Canals (Barcelona)
 1st Prize..... Cho, Jay-Hyuck (Korea)
 1st Prize..... Gerstein, Kirill (Russia)
 1st Prize..... Sinkevych, Inesa (Ukraine/Israel)
 2nd Prize..... Akagi, Yukiko (Japan)
 2nd Prize..... Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)
 2nd Prize..... Hong, Kookhee (Korea)
 2nd Prize..... Moutouzkin, Alexander (Russia)
 3rd Prize Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)
 3rd Prize Méndez, José Ramón (Spain)
- Marisa Montiel (Spain)
 1st Prize..... Melikian, Sofia (Armenia)
- Marsala, Italy
 3rd Prize Sheng, Yuan (China)
- Mazara Del Vallo (Italy)
 2nd Prize..... Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)

Metropolitan Orchestra (NJ)

1st Prize..... Hung, Chi-Ying (Taiwan)

Minnesota International Piano E-Competition (USA)

2nd Prize..... Yoo, Ian Yungwook (Korea)6th Prize Sinkevych, Inesa (Ukraine/Israel)

Montreal, Canada

2nd Prize..... Moutouzkyne, Alexander (Russia)

Monza, Italy

6th Prize Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)

MSM (Precollege) Concerto Competition

Winners Cho, Jay-Hyuck (Korea)
 Dinnerstein, Simone (USA)
 Hung, Chi-Ying (Taiwan)
 Kent, Adam (USA)
 Kim, Albert (USA)
 Lherman, Paul (USA)
 Shorr, Aaron (USA)

MSM Concerto Competition

Winners Arrieta, Rowena (Philippines)
 Beliakovich, Alexandra (Belarus)
 Belli, Elena (USA)
 Bruser, Elena (USA)
 Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)
 Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)
 Gerstein, Kirill (Russia)
 Hong, Kookhee (Korea)
 Hung, Chi-Yung (Taiwan)
 Laurel, Edward (USA)
 Lin, Gloria (Taiwan)
 Park, Sae-Kyung (Korea)
 Sheng, Yuan (China)
 Shorr, Aaron (USA)
 Söderberg, Martin (Sweden)
 Wang, Xia-Yin (China)
 Yu, Zhi-Liang (China)
 Zhai, Weiwei (China)
 Zhang, Yu (China)

Munz Chopin Competition (MSM)

1st Prize..... Beliakovich, Alexandra (Belarus)

- 1st Prize..... Kosmieja, Adam (Poland)
 2nd Prize..... Floril, Jonathan (Ecuador)
 2nd Prize..... Namirovsky, Michael (Israel)
- Murray Dranoff (FL)
 3rd Prize Pérez-Molina Duo (Spain)
- New Jersey Symphony (USA)
 1st Prize..... Kawano, Akemi (Japan)
- New Orleans (LA)
 1st Prize..... Moutouzkine, Alexander (Russia)
- North Carolina Symphony (USA)
 2nd Prize..... Kim, Youngho (Korea)
- NYSMTA (New York)
 1st Prize..... Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)
- Paderewski Foundation (New York)
 1st Prize..... Brewster-Franzetti, Allison (USA)
- Palm Beach (FL)
 1st Prize..... Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)
- Panama International Competition (Panama)
 1st Prize..... Wang, Jingjing (China)
 1st Prize..... Yoo, Ian Yungwook (Korea)
 2nd Prize..... Beliakovich, Alexandra (Belarus)
 2nd Prize..... Hong, Kookhee (Korea)
 3rd Prize..... Moutouzkine, Alexander (Russia)
 3rd Prize..... Neeman, Edward (Australia/USA)
 3rd Prize..... Wang, Jingjing (China)
 4th Prize..... Sinkevych, Inesa (Ukraine/Israel)
 5th Prize..... Buxton, Robert (USA)
 5th Prize..... Khanina, Anna (Russia)
- Piano Teachers Congress (New York)
 1st Prize..... Arrieta, Rowena (Philippines)
 1st Prize..... Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)
 1st Prize..... Kim, Youngho (Korea)
 1st Prize..... Moutouzkine, Alexander (Russia)
- Pilar Bayona (Zaragoza)
 1st Prize..... Söderberg, Martin (Sweden)
 2nd Prize..... Gerstein, Kirill (Russia)
 3rd Prize..... Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)

- 3rd Prize Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)
 3rd Prize Moutouzkine, Alexander (Russia)
 3rd Prize Méndez, José Ramón (Spain)
- Porto (Portugal)
 2nd Prize Sinkevych, Inesa (Ukraine/Israel)
 3rd Prize Kim, Youngho (Korea)
- Queens Symphony (New York)
 1st Prize Cruz, Jovianney Emmanuel (Philippines)
- Rachmaninoff Competition (Russia)
 Winner Kim, Jae-Hee (Korea)
- Renée B. Fisher (CT)
 1st Prize Kim, Albert (USA)
- Ricardo Viñes (Spain)
 3rd Prize Wang, Jingjing (China)
- Ricardo Viñes (Spain)
 3rd Prize Wang, Jingjing (China)
- Rubinstein Prize, Anton Rubinstein International Competition, Dresden (Germany)
 Recipient Jeong Yoon Lee
- Rubinstein Award, Artists International (New York)
 Recipient Sheng, Yuan
- Santander (Spain)
 Finalist Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)
- Schumann (Leipzig)
 1st Prize Nara, Kiai (Japan)
- Senigallia (Italy)
 1st Prize Wang, Xun (China)
- Serge Koussevitzky (New York)
 1st Prize Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)
- South Orange Symphony (NJ)
 1st Prize Brewster-Franzetti, Allison (USA)
- Spanish Composers Competition (Madrid)
 Spanish Prize Sinkevych, Inesa (Ukraine/Israel)

Stravinsky Competition (IL)

Winner..... Kim, Jae-Hee (Korea)

Sviatoslav Richter (Moscow)

4th Prize Yoo, Ian Yungwook (Korea)

Thomas Richner (USA)

1st Prize..... Kent, Adam (USA)

Toledo (Spain)

2nd Prize..... Neeman, Edward (Australia/USA)

Torrefranca (Italy)

Winner..... Vinokur, Olga (Russia)

Van Cliburn (TX)

Special Award..... Moutouzkyne, Alexander (Russia)

Vianna Da Motta (Portugal)

2nd Prize..... Yoo, Ian Yungwook (Korea)

5th Prize Sinkevych, Inesa (Ukraine/Israel)

Viña Del Mar (Chile)

2nd Prize..... Díaz-Jerez, Gustavo (Spain)

Virginia Waring (CA)

2nd Prize..... Watanabe, Chie (Japan)

World Competition (Cincinnati)

1st Prize..... Söderberg, Martin (Sweden)

1st Prize..... Tessman, Tatiana (Russia)

2nd Prize..... Beliakovich, Alexandra (Belarus)

2nd Prize..... Namirovsky, Michael (Israel)

Yamaha (Japan)

2nd Prize..... Pérez-Molina Duo (Spain)

Yellow Springs (USA)

1st Prize..... Bruser, Jessica