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1. Musicianship

Through the ages music teachers and directors have been imploring or demanding instrumentalists and singers to apply more and better musicianship to their art. Because definition of the term "musicianship" is abstract or even nebulous, many synonyms or explanatory phrases are used in urging musicians to employ good musicianship. Commonly heard are these exhortations: "sing", "phrase", "espressivo", "project", "communicate", "with feeling", "say something", etc. Unfortunately, these terms are almost as nebulous as the parent word, "musicianship", which they are meant to elucidate.

One of the goals of this book will be to give specific instructions and suggestions which will help the performer to put usable and audible musicianship into performance. The trouble with the vague and nebulous words listed above is that they do not tell us what to do *physically* with the music. While these words may convey beautiful images and thoughts to the player, these thoughts will not be audible to the listener unless the player converts them into concrete and definite physical action on his instrument or voice.

Here is an aside which might illustrate my point. I have been aware, during many years of orchestra playing with the world's great conductors, that there are two basic types of rehearsal techniques used. There is the technique used by the conductor who describes what he wants with flowery phrases or those nebulous words listed above. In due time he might get the effect he is after, but rehearsal time in a large professional orchestra is limited and expensive, and this approach is not usually appreciated by the players (or manager). In my observation, the conductors who get the musical results they desire quickly and efficiently are those who employ the second technique, that of using short, definite words. They may be accused of being brusque, even rude, but the meaning of their instruction is never in doubt. Instead of asking the orchestra to "do something" or to "visualize a garden in the moonlight" (a request one conductor actually made to me), these terse, efficient conductors will bark, "shorter", "louder", "more *big*", "bigger *diminuendo*", etc. These instructions, very poetic, give the player a definite physical action to perform on the instrument. And this is the objective of instruction. Give the performer specific instructions and he in turn will produce the desired musical effect. Of course the conductor has many sound ideas, too, but in order to achieve the desired physical techniques to correct them.

Back to our consideration

of my opinion, the best definition

of musicianship as applied to

the instrument is good taste

in the defined as

might be defined as "moderation as applied to music". In the great majority of musical situations this is doubtless true. How boring is the playing of the student who uses no expression at all, due to his concentration on simply placing the notes correctly. This is similar to the beginner learning a new language. He intones the series of words of a sentence in a monotone which reveals the fact that he can read words but does not as yet understand the meaning of the sentence. Let us correlate the speaker with the musician. In music, the individual notes would be the equivalent of the individual words in a sentence. Comprehension is only achieved when the words (notes) are strung together to make a complete sentence (in music, a phrase). Even then, the speaker (player) must use some instinctive inflections in his voice (instrument) to make the sentence (musical phrase) intelligible. The beginning musician, like the beginning language student, is simply too involved in producing the individual notes (words) to be concerned with the meaning of the phrase (sentence), let alone himself with inflections of sound in his instrument (voice). In music, the total effect of the "less-than-moderation", that is, too little or too much, the other hand, no one wants to hear a *staccato*, too loud a *forte* or too soft a *piano*. In short, there are a great many of these things on having the shortest *staccato*, etc. Unfortunately, the student is often eager to display regard to the requirement of the instructor in any aspect of musical performance, but is usually insufficiently tactically right. Nevertheless, the student must hear the music as it is played.



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exponent of this art during my youth was the famous violin virtuoso, Fritz Kreisler, who could take ordinary tunes—"café tunes", we called them—and play them with such elegance and expression that often half a symphony program would be set aside for him to play encore after encore of these tunes, with the audience clamoring for more.

Karl Krueger, the articulate conductor of the Kansas City Philharmonic during my early symphony days, was fond of saying that a musical phrase lived. And, if it lived, it breathed. Although some of us younger musicians laughed at what we thought was a grotesque and far-fetched idea, the more I matured musically the more I began to comprehend that Mr. Krueger's idea had great depth of understanding and was perhaps the most logical and expressive way of describing a musical phrase that could have been chosen. If you will analyze your physical response to breathing you will be aware that during inhalation there occurs an increasing tension in the body—nothing extreme—perhaps just a slight tightening of shoulder and chest muscles. Then, as you start to exhale, this tension gradually lessens and the feeling becomes one of increasing relaxation. Since breathing can be a voluntary physical action, we can inhale as deeply and slowly as we please, within reason, hold this breath, and begin our exhalation at will, continuing it slowly or quickly. We have complete control of our breathing tempo, depth and forcefulness. The important thing, in this analogy of breathing to phrasing,

is the feeling of mounting tension during inhalation and the gradual relaxation during exhalation. Mr. Krueger contended that a musical phrase, in "breathing", grows in tension to a certain predetermined point in the music, as when *inhaling*. Then, upon reaching this point, the phrase starts to relax, as when *exhaling*. For want of a better description of this moment when the mounting tension in a phrase reaches its peak point and starts to relax, I will hereafter refer to it as the "pivot-point" of the phrase. As one becomes cognizant of this idea and starts to apply it to his phrasing he will find it increasingly easy to identify and recognize this pivot-point in a phrase. Your opinion as to where this pivot-point occurs in a phrase may differ from that of your colleagues. No matter, this is one of the differences which makes music such an interesting art and which allows the musician's personality to become involved in the music. It also separates the good performers from the bad, since, although there is no precise rule as to where this pivot-point must occur in the phrase, some choices are better than others!

Following are a few clues which might be helpful in determining where the pivot-point occurs in a phrase. Occasionally the pivot point is located at the highest pitched note in the phrase, although this is certainly not a definite criterion. Sometimes we find this point of maximum tension in a "suspension" note just before the resolution of the phrase.

Horn in F
Prélude

Likely pivot-points; high notes well-centered in the phrases. First instinct is to pivot here.

Better pivot-points; the phrases now lead to the "suspension" notes, enhancing their yearning quality and their desire to "resolve."

GALLAY *

Often the composer will indicate the pivot-point with a *crescendo* leading to it and a *diminuendo* leading away from it.

SECOND SYMPHONY,
Brahms Violincello

Adagio non troppo

*Many of the musical examples in this book will be taken from the horn literature, since, as a horn player, the author is most familiar with this music. Also, since the horn is difficult, horn music is

usually relatively simple, which makes it ideal for clear, uncluttered musical illustrations.

make a *crescendo* or *diminuendo* has, in effect, arrived at a *subito* point, whether or not the word *subito* is written. This simply emphasizes my point: dynamic changes are either made gradually (*cresc.*, *dim.*, etc.) or suddenly (*subito*, or the absence of *cresc.* or *dim.*).

The words or signs for *crescendo* and *diminuendo* are well understood and most good musicians can play a well-calculated *crescendo* or *diminuendo* and arrive at the new dynamic with the correct volume and without making the gradation uneven or in a "lumpy" manner. But there is a technique which can be used to make sudden dynamic changes very clearly heard and understood by the listener and this I will explain. Since the whole idea in producing an effective *subito* is to give the dynamic change a sharp and clear line of demarcation, perhaps even a somewhat dramatic contrast, the performer must be very careful not to "drift" into the new dynamic. This "drifting" is usually

the result of the performer preparing his new dynamic too soon, thus "telegraphing" ahead his intention to make the change. Of course this completely removes the element of surprise which is inherent in the *subito* effect. To prevent this drifting, slightly exaggerate the dynamic preceding the *subito* in a very subtle manner as the *subito* is approached. That is: gradually (and subtly) make a loud dynamic louder or a soft dynamic softer as the *subito* moment is approached. Then, on the very first notes of the *subito*, begin the new dynamic in a slightly exaggerated volume—too soft in *p* or *pp*; too loud in *f* or *ff*. This will result in a larger "step" between the two contrasting dynamic levels, making the *subito* distinct and preserving the element of suddenness which is the very meaning and essence of *subito*. Following is an example of how this is accomplished:

ETUDE FOR HORN NO. 10, BOOK 5, Maxime-Alphonse*

Moderato. $\text{♩} = 63$

mf very, very small *cresc.* *p Subito* *p* almost *pp* gradually get back to normal *p* continue

f strong *p Subito* *p* almost *pp* gradually get back to normal *p*

We must now regard the other aspect of the use of dynamics—that of controlling and combining our individual dynamics with that of the other performers in an ensemble so that the musical result is in complete balance between all participants. Consider for a moment the variety of musical situations which must be taken into account when determining how loud or soft to play when performing in an ensemble. I can think of at least six situations which have a bearing on what dynamic level we will choose to play.

1. The importance of the passage. If this is your "big moment" and the rest of the ensemble is so insensitive it will not stay below your dynamic level, then you are going to have to play above that accepted level—regardless of the printed dynamic level—your conductor will be your best friend at such times and will not permit the ensemble to drown.
2. Association with other performers. If you are an accompaniment part, it is your duty to match the dynamic level of the soloist. A poor dynamic combination of parts is often the result of (and they often do) fail

As an example: if the trombone (!) is much louder than the euphonist, you must be aware of it.

3. The



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Here are two actual examples of this rhythm:

LA MER, Claude Debussy Horns 1 & 2 in F



ETUDES FOR HORN, Book 4, No. 9 by Maxime-Alphonse*



This problem is compounded when the notes are tied together in various combinations, as they frequently are. Here are a few examples:

TOD UND VERKLÄRUNG, Richard Strauss 1st Horn in F

Allegro, molto agitato.



RAPSODIE ESPAGNOLE, Maurice Ravel† Horns in F

Assez lent et d'un rythme las (♩ = 63)



SYMPHONIE PATHETIQUE (NO. 5), Tchaikowsky Horn I in F

Allegro vivo



Obviously, slow, careful practice of these problems. But one help[†] tied combinations correctly contains a set of "after-br

*Extract from "200 ALPHONSE. Cor Publishers. Re



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