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Voicing: The Divided Hand

Voicing in piano music refers to the way **lines are balanced**. In orchestras and choirs, different instruments or singers are given various parts while pianists must show the separate lines (or voices) through contrast in **dynamics and tone colors**.

Voicing requires that individual fingers of the same hand perform separate tasks, such as one finger holding down a key while other fingers play.

- It may be helpful to think of each hand as having an **outer hand** (fingers 3-4-5) and an **inner hand** (fingers 1-2-3).
- **Finger 3** helps direct the weight to either side of the hand.

Finger 3 weighting
the **outer hand**
(fingers 3-4-5)



Finger 3 weighting
the **inner hand**
(fingers 1-2-3)



Play the **top voice as legato as possible** and the other voices **detached**. Direct weight to the RH **outer hand**.

Voicing Exercise

Lento

5

11

1 2

Repeat in minor by lowering all F's a half step.

Broken Chords and Inversions

- First play hands separately in ♩ rhythm. Repeat as written in ♪♪ rhythm.
- Align the forearm with finger 3 to begin. Lightly touch the elbow (with other hand) to keep it stationary, allowing the **wrist to pivot** as the **forearm aligns** with the finger that is playing.

Major: 5 3 2 1 5 4 2 1 5 3 2 1 5 3 2 1 1 2 3 1 2 4 1 2 3 5
 Minor: 4 4 2 1 5 3 2 1 5 3 2 1 1 2 3 1 2 4 1 2 3 4

Arpeggio Prep

- Move the **forearm** in a smooth **horizontal motion** as finger 1 crosses under the hand.
- **Do not turn the wrist** as finger 1 crosses under the hand.

This



Forearm moving horizontally (LH)

Not This



Wrist is turned (LH)

Major: 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5
 Minor: 4 4 2 1 5 3 2 1 5 3 2 1 1 2 3 1 2 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5

Arpeggio Exercise in D

- **Keeping the hand shape**, use a continuous forearm motion, without turning the wrist.

Major: 5 3 4 2 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 4 5 3 4 1 3 4 3 4 1 3 4 5
 Minor: 4 4 2 1 5 3 2 1 5 3 2 1 1 2 3 1 2 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5

Balancing Melody and Repeated Chords

Repeated notes and chords require careful listening on the piano because there will be a crescendo created by the repetition. **Begin repeated notes softly** and listen for dynamic control.

When repeated notes are in an inner voice, keep the **weight constant on the outer notes**. Use **finger substitution** to make a continuous legato.

Voicing Warm-Up (from Op. 141, No. 8, Cornelius Gurlitt)

Moderato

p

3 5 4 3-4 3 2-4 3

5 2 3 1 2-1 5 1 2

- Blend the repeated chords into a **murmuring background** for the LH motives. Allow the keys to push the fingers up, to **ride the keys** up and down.
- Keep the left upper arm and elbow relaxed when crossing over.

Expressive Etude (Excerpt)

Cornelius Gurlitt (1820-1901)
Op. 51, No. 3

Andante con espressione

pp

5 3 1 5 4 2 LH 2 2 1

6 5 2 1 4 2 1 5 2 1 4 2 1 5 2 1 2 1

3 1 2 1 5 2 1 5

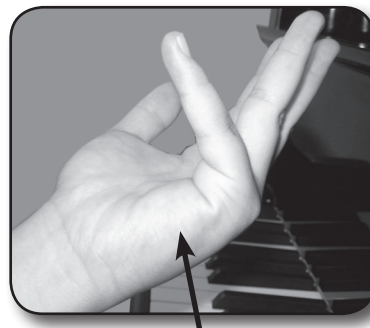
pp

The Outer Fingers (3-4-5)

The outer fingers (especially fingers 4 and 5) in each hand provide major **support** in piano playing. **Finger 5 has its own muscle** in the palm of the hand that must be activated and connected with the arms.

Finding the muscle for finger 5:

- With your palm facing upward, point finger 5 to the ceiling, watching and feeling the muscle work.
- Keeping that muscle activated, balance finger 5 on a key (supported by the forearm and triceps.)
- Then **relax the knuckle** of finger 5, keeping the nail joint firm. Adjust the arms until comfortable.



Finger 5 muscle

Not This

Tense finger 5
knuckle, pressed



This

Relaxed
finger 5 knuckle



- In *Voicing Etude in A Major*, balance on finger 5 (support finger), which allows the other fingers to move freely.
- In the **double notes** such as in RH, m. 5 and LH, m. 6, first play the outer fingers alone. Keep the weight on the outer fingers when adding the inner voice. Play the four eighth notes in **one motion** of the arm.

Voicing Etude in A Major

Arnoldo Sartorio
(1853-1936)

Moderato

3 5

1 2 1 3 4 5

3 2 4 1 5 3 4 1 5 3 2

5 1 4 1 3 2

5 1

3 2 5 2 1

dim.

p

3 5

1 2