

**2018 AGO National Convention, Kansas City, MO**  
**Dr. Wilma Jensen**

**Class I: Developing Natural Keyboard Technique**

**Organ Touches Influenced by Concepts of Piano Technique**  
**(It takes the entire body to play the organ!)**

In my mid-thirties I was having technical problems with wrist tension and insufficient control of fingers 4 and 5. Since I had stopped practicing the piano I realized I needed assistance to make any improvement and so decided to study piano with Ernestine Scott, a well-known teacher in Oklahoma City. She was teaching piano to all ages of children from five years of age through piano majors at Oklahoma City University. The children had amazing technical facility, and her college students were winning competitions. In addition to my private study, Mrs. Scott took me to observe Piano Masterclasses and she made numerous suggestions for my study of writings of piano performers and pedagogues.

When attending a workshop with Adele Marcus, famous piano pedagogue of Juilliard School of Music in New York City, I remember well her displaying her hands and moving the fingers, saying “The fingers each swing from the knuckles, but the thumb moves laterally. The thumb does not move up and down; one rotates to the thumb.” I knew she was talking directly to me. This was the beginning of my learning to include more natural physical motions in organ technique as well as piano technique.

Each finger **swings** freely from the knuckle to the key, while the thumb **rotates** to the key to play. The thumb does not lift to play. Separating the action of the thumb from that of the fingers is often one of the most difficult tasks for keyboardists. One should strive for the use of **natural rotation** between thumb and fingers, rotation forward for semitones, rotation forward for short finger 5, and more visible rotation for large intervals than small intervals. Controlled rotation in general should always be present. The thumb by means of rotation carries the fingers from place to place.

In *Pièces de Clavecin* by Jean-Philippe **Rameau** (1683-1764), he states “...see that every finger acquires a separate movement; get used to lifting one while lowering the other. The strength behind them, their weight and their movement become equalized in time. When practicing *trills* or *shakes*, only those fingers which are in use should be raised as high as possible. However, as the movement becomes familiar, these fingers are raised less and less and the considerable movement employed at the outset is finally replaced by a movement which is light and brisk. Take great care not to rush the end of the trill in terminating it, for it will *close* naturally once one has grown accustomed to it.” In starting new repertoire on the organ which may have active subdivisions of the beat, I think it is helpful to exaggerate the finger activity, which helps in “setting” the motions for later independence and clarity. The same passages can be practiced at the piano, also with exaggerated motions of the fingers, but in contrast to rotations of the thumb.

In developing natural **rotation** it is important to discover an appropriate height of the wrist. Sometimes, in rotating to the thumb, the arm pushes the thumb too low. It is important that the wrist be high enough when moving to the thumb and that it does not drop too low, but moves laterally. There is rotation forward for semitones. Rameau advises “First, it is necessary to sit at the harpsichord with the elbows higher than the level of the keyboard, so that the hand can drop onto the keyboard merely by the natural movement of the wrist

joint. It is so that the hand should drop as of itself on to the keyboard that the elbows have to be higher than the level of this latter, and they are never too high as long as the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> can rest on the edge of the keys. The wrist must always be supple.” Of course, in moving to higher manuals at the organ the elbow may not be able to be at the level of that keyboard, but just be aware that the wrist may need to be somewhat elevated. I find that in very facile passages a slightly elevated wrist assists in ease of finger dexterity.

Ideally, the keyboardist needs to control the **speed of attack** into the key as well as speed of its release out of the key. Although this is more critical on a tracker instrument, the control also assists in sensitive timing of the line which results in more musical control even on an electro-pneumatic instrument. On a tracker it is essential that as divisions are coupled and more stops added, the fingers, hands, arms, and body have the ability to control the increased weight.

**Weight** from the forearm and upper arm can be added as needed behind each finger. The weight travels forward, not down, from the forearm through the relaxed wrist, which will allow the wrist to rebound up, not down, to the firm first finger joint. It is important to remember that equal weight can be added behind each finger if the weight comes from the arm and travels through that relaxed wrist to the firm first finger joint. The possibility of adding equal weight behind fingers includes even fingers 4 and 5. When adding weight, be sure fingers not used in a chord are raised slightly above the key.

Because organists cannot control the volume of each note when striking the keys, they often do not use **natural voicing** in the hands as they would at the piano. Pianists generally play with the weight on the outside of the hands, and may often soften the physically strong thumb. In order to emphasize and crescendo the arch of a solo line, extra weight will need to be added, even through weak fingers. The crescendo in the hand will help stretch the timing of the line naturally, which at the organ allows for the notes to become longer. When voicing in the hand is not present, it is very difficult mentally to calculate such a stretch without a natural physical gesture. It is helpful also to voice **chords** with the top note firmer than the rest of the chord in the right hand and left hand. There may be times, however, when a different voice may need to be emphasized. The practice of voicing greatly assists fingers 4 and 5 develop technique.

When natural voicing is absent in the organist’s hands, there often develops the habit to “bear down” on the keyboard rather than to add balanced weight with the arm through the relaxed wrist. This habit often causes wrist tension and a heavy thumb. The tense, heavy thumb interferes with the flexibility and facile activity of the fingers. Because the tendons of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> fingers are “tethered” together, the 4<sup>th</sup> finger does not have the ability to lift independently; however one can still rotate to this finger and, with practice, add equal weight as to the other fingers.

I suggest students learn to use **voicing** in the hands on the organ as at the piano. To begin this study, try playing hymns at the **piano**, holding each chord for a very long time, but playing the soprano louder than the alto and bass louder than the tenor. It may be wise to practice each hand separately, putting them together when ready for this kind of control. Again, pianists play with the weight on the outside of the hands, with the thumb generally softer.

**Tobias Matthay** wrote the text *The Visible and Invisible in Pianoforte Technique*, in which he explains the relationship between active fingers and rotation, and how these two forces determine touch control. The fingers may at times be very active and visible, and the rotation nearly invisible; at other times, especially in slow, very legato passages, the rotation may be very visible and the action of the fingers almost invisible. In each case, both finger action and rotation are always present. It is the balance in the proportion of these two forces that results in the type and quality of touch control.

When students are very young they sometimes develop a facility without knowing how it happened and are possibly unable to understand or explain their own physical gestures. This is quite similar to sports when children seem to have a special affinity and talent for certain sports. In time, serious coaching needs to be undertaken to achieve improvement, either in music or in sports.

Beginning Organ Methods usually suggest exercises which assist in the students' development of a fast attack with each finger and a fast release of each finger, with a springing up of each finger in a timed release at the rest following each note. Keeping this kind of fast attack and fast release for some time helps build individual finger control and a good foundation for technique.

However, in time, other types of controls for different types of touches need to be developed. A slow attack and slow release for **legato** and **over-legato** need to be achieved, which results in much visible rotation between notes. This is simply "passing the weight on from finger to finger." There can be more weight behind each finger, along with a slower attack, and much less independence of the fingers. On a tracker instrument a fast attack into the key after a rest or articulation has a noticeable "chiff" or kind of "spit" in the attack. There is less of this "chiff" with a slow attack into the key and legato playing. The slow attack is valuable also on an electro-pneumatic instrument since the physical gesture affects the sensitive "timing" of all notes in the musical line.

In playing **detached chords**, often the speed of the attack can be quite different from the speed of the release. In large, sustained chords as in the opening of the first movement "Allegro" of the Widor *Symphony VI*, the attack can be fast, followed by relaxation while holding the chord. Matthay speaks about using more energy to play the note than to hold the note. Then the arm, through rotation, carries the hand to the next note. When the arm carries the hand to the next chord the relaxed wrist comes up, not down. The tempo of that rebound gives the approximate length of the chord. It means the release is not as fast as the attack. If the release is too fast on a tracker instrument, one can often hear the tracker's "flap" and make a noise. Similar to the conductor's gesture, the wrist rebounding from attack to attack carries the hand by rotation from place to place or chord to chord. Too many times we see just a tight wrist bearing down, which interferes with the natural, arched flow between chords.

For beginning study in organ, students are taught to release a note or chord at an exact point in time in the measure or phrase. However, as we progress musically, there are many times we want to "**phrase off**" for a release, not for a specific time in the meter. My piano teacher, Ernestine Scott, taught that a rest is not necessarily an exact point of silence. I have never seen that concept in writing, but I believe it is true. A pianist often holds a sustaining pedal into the rest so the sound disappears gradually. Likewise, the acoustical environment in a room can continue the sound with reverberation. So when composers have written music for a very live room, but the work is being played in a dead room, this may mean that notated chords followed by rests should not necessarily be the written value on the page, but allowed to sound into the rest when musically appropriate for the proper effect. This also means performances will change in different venues according to the acoustics.

For releases which are not timed, but "phrased off," the forearm allows the wrist to lift naturally (up) out of the key for expressive nuances of time. At the opening of the Franck *Choral in B Minor* think how many notes after the downbeats need to be released slightly early. The motion of the upward wrist rebound helps "time" that release. It is like the conductor's gesture flowing between beats. The releases are not a kind of "on/off", but uplifted wrists continue to move until the next notes are played. This means the actual silence of sound occurs at an unspecified time on the way to the next sound.

Of course, when speaking about natural physical motions, we must be sure we are sitting in the best way possible to have all our weight on the **bench**, the torso able to move naturally, the arms swinging freely, the shoulders back and relaxed and the head and neck relaxed. Again, all one's weight must be on the bench. The height of the bench should be determined by the height of the person from the knees to the bottom of the feet resting lightly on the pedals just in front of the semitones. The position on the bench should vary depending on each person's height from the knees to the seat. For a person who is tall from the knees to the seat, he/she will need to sit far back on the bench. If quite tall, part of the bottom may be off the bench.

The importance of developing natural physical gestures is its effect on achieving and communicating the musical result with control and finesse.

## Explanation of the Many Variations of Touch

### Body Involvement for Keyboard Technique

**Posture**—Maintain good posture. Be sure total weight of body is on the bench with legs dangling and relaxed. Many people sit too far forward. Be able to lean forward without losing balance. Arms should be relaxed and shoulders back. Elbows are not pulled into touching the body, but are rounded naturally.

**Finger**—Fast attack and fast, timed release. All fingers (2, 3, 4, 5) are capable of equal speed of attack and release. Let fingers swing to each key from the knuckles. In a slow tempo, practice slower attacks into the key with each finger while still feeling the arc or curve of each swing.

**Rotation**—Arm motion with relaxed, flexible wrist. Small, natural rotations are present, but scarcely visible. Rotate to and away from thumb. Do not lift thumb to play. The faster the speed, the smaller and less visible the rotations will be. With slower speed, the rotations may become quite large and more visible. The faster the tempo, the closer to the key all motions and actions will be. Add rotation as needed to finger 4 because it is tethered to the third finger and cannot lift well without assistance. Rotate forward for finger 5 since it is short.

### Continuous Motion and Follow-Through

The following section is an excerpt from *What Every Pianist Needs to Know About the Body, with Supplementary Material for Organists* (Mark, Gary, & Miles, pp. 137-138). In this book are additional writings by well-known organists and pedagogues **Roberta Gary** and **Thom Miles**. I totally agree with their concepts.

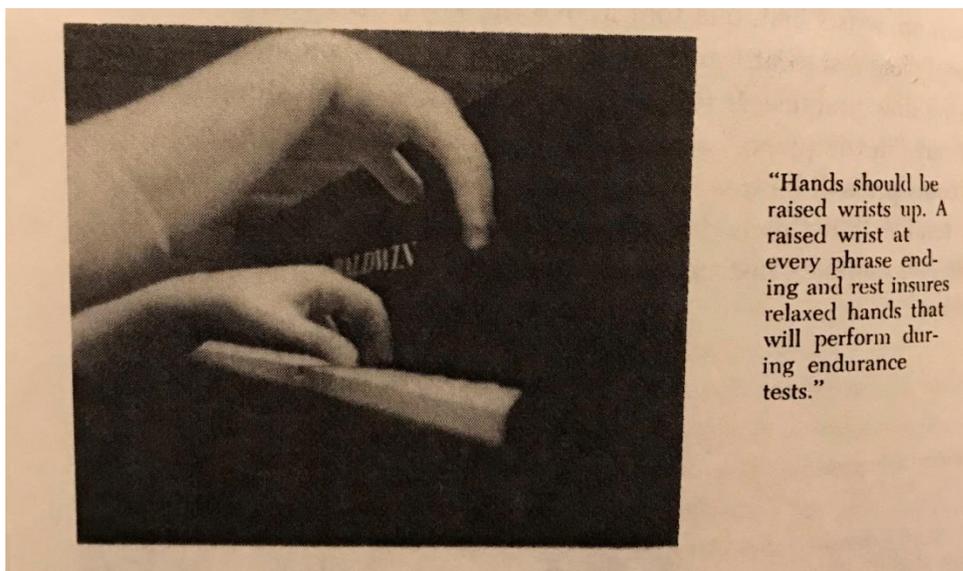
Music moves. In order to play freely and musically, organists must move also. When the body map is accurate, when the muscles are free and fluid, and when inhibitions are discarded, movement will be continuous, just as air moving into pipes is continuous and fluid. The body in continuous motion must not be held in a fixed position.

Organists more than anyone else need all of their joints, as well as whole-body awareness, while playing. Many organists sit on the bench stiffly, facing forward, afraid to move more than their hands and feet. They may wonder why they are uncomfortable, or even in pain. Organ playing requires a very accurate body map. It requires both a physical and mental awareness that movement while playing the organ is good. From the feet, through the legs, pelvis, spine, arm structure, hands, neck, and head—all parts of the body should contribute freely to organ playing.

There is continuous and free movement of the body. How do you know how to move, and in which direction? Move the way the music moves. Move as the musical lines move with your arm structure, your head, and your spine. Remember also that a place of balance is a place we move in and out of.

Another related concept organists often fail to grasp is that of follow-through. Imagine a tennis player hitting a ball. The racket does not stop moving as soon as the ball is hit. There is a **follow-through gesture** as the movement of the racket continues. This is true in virtually all sports activities and should be true as well when playing a keyboard instrument.

This continuous movement will involve a series of follow-through gestures. It is easier to remain in motion than to be continually stopping movement and starting it again. Careful observation and analysis of good playing will reveal thousands of examples of continuous motions and follow-through. Organists need to explore, observe, and learn these gestures if free and easy playing is to be accomplished.



(Ruth Slenczynska, p. 34)

## The Many Varying Touches

The following are touches I describe from my reading of various resources.

**Active fingers** (Bright Legato)—Each finger (2, 3, 4, 5) equally capable of speed of attack and release. Some attacks may be slow for more legato playing. Let fingers swing to each key from the knuckles.

**Rotation**—Arm and forearm motion with relaxed, flexible wrist. Small, natural rotations present, but scarcely visible. Rotate forward for fifth finger because it is so short. Rotate to and away from thumb. Do not lift thumb to play. (This is agreed upon by most pianists). Adele Marcus says, "By the very structure of the hand, the thumb moves horizontally, the other fingers vertically from the knuckles." Rotate forward for all semitones, which prepares for moving sideways and down with the thumb which follows. If the rotation forward has not taken place the following move to the thumb may result in the wrist being too low. (See quotations from Rameau about the level of the wrist.) The faster the speed, the smaller and less visible the rotations will be. With

slower speed, the rotations may become larger and more visible. The faster the tempo, the closer to the key are all motions and actions.

**Bright, Clear Legato**—Fingers active, all fingers capable of equal speed into and out of key, small natural rotations. Adele Marcus—“But you must realize that the faster the speed, the closer you must get to the keyboard. When you strike any given object slowly, you have a wide leverage; when you strike faster, you have to get closer to the object.”

**Legato**—The more legato the passage, the finger can have a less fast attack and release. Rotation becomes more visible than in faster bright legato. Many gradations are possible.

**Over-Legato**—Finger much less active. Think of turning a doorknob with fingers not moving. Fingers are more “set” and weight is passed on from finger to finger by rotation. Wrist motion and rotation are very visible. Of course fingers will need to be somewhat involved. Many gradations possible.

**Ordinary Touch of the Baroque**—Developing this touch should perhaps wait until the hands and fingers already have many good controls. See *J.S. Bach’s Keyboard Technique: A Historical Introduction* by Quentin Faulkner for descriptions of Ordinary Touch by Quantz, Kirnberger, C.P.E. Bach, and many other composers of the period. See *Organ Technique Modern and Early* by George Ritchie and George Stauffer for beginning manual and pedal exercises to develop Ordinary Touch and all toe pedaling. (See *Part II Early Organ Technique: A Method of Articulated Playing for Music Composed before 1750*, pp. 167-256 (compositions are fingered). Also see texts by Jon Laukvik, John Brock and Sandra Soderlund.

**Vibrated Legato**—Matthay calls this “arm vibration touch.” This is a somewhat detached touch, non-legato, similar to the martellato touch of piano and strings. The firm impulse from the forearm to the first finger joint moves the relaxed wrist in an upward motion. This can be vibrated legato or as speed increases, the fingers can pull out and become more detached. This touch is useful in medium-fast aggressive passages such as free sections in North German works or fantasies. This touch, however, cannot move extremely quickly. It can go from vibrated legato to vibrated non-legato to staccato. The fingers will “pull out” after the impulse the faster the speed.

**Pulling Out Touch**—When the speed is very fast and too fast for a vibrated touch the fingers need to pull out of the key after playing. For the sake of clarity, the finger actually physically pulls away from the surface of the key. The fingers touch the keys to play but pull above the key for the release. It is good to practice this at the piano so that the weak fingers are able to pull out quickly. “Finger staccatos, produced by wiping the keys, are also effective when properly applied.” (Lhevinne, p. 36)

“Bach’s ‘swift release’ (Schnellen) is described by Forkel as follows:

The measured force or the amount of pressure applied to the keys must be maintained in equal strength and in such a manner that the finger is not raised perpendicularly from the key, but, rather, that it glides off the front of the key by gradually drawing back the tip of the finger towards the palm of the hand... When changing from one key to another, this gliding off causes the amount of force or pressure with which the first note has been kept down to be transferred with the greatest of speed to the next finger, so that the two sounds are neither disjointed nor blended together. The touch is, therefore, as C.P.E. Bach says, neither too long nor too short, but just what it ought to be... The drawing back of the finger, and the rapid transfer thereby effected of the force of one finger to that following, produces the highest degree of clearness in the attack of single notes, so that every passage performed in this manner sounds brilliant, rolling and rounded, as if each note were a pearl. It does not cost the listener the least exertion to understand a passage

performed in this way. ... The 'swift release' requires less time than the usual touch, with its raising of the finger. For this reason it is extremely suitable for very fast passages, as for example for 32nd notes in J.S. Bach's Pièce d'orgue ("Fantasie") in G (572). ... The short notes played in this manner always end abruptly, producing 'the highest degree of clearness in the attack of single notes.' (Laukvik, Part 1, p. 26)

**Leggiero**—A very light, fast finger touch. Very active fingers with small natural motions. Slow initial practicing should start legato with active fingers. When speed increases, touch can move with clarity toward staccato but is not necessarily staccato. Smallest muscles used. Becomes very light with increased speed (most difficult touch to define, teach and achieve).

**Staccato**—Many degrees of staccato possible. Various speeds of attack and release according to musical requirement.

**Detached chords**—Varying speeds of attack according to musical requirements. Use impulse from the arm, relaxed wrist moving upward and forward. Forearm moves wrist during the holding of the chord. If the chord should have a long duration, the wrist will move slowly after the attack. There may be a fast attack but the move through with the wrist can be very slow according to the musical needs. The speed of attack is often different than the speed of the follow-through or rebound with the wrist. Shape of chord should be "set" in the hand with unused fingers slightly raised so impulses are behind only fingers to be used ("cookie cutter" shape). Be sure thumb stays very relaxed. Adele Marcus—"short chords are played from the stomach muscles." This makes the attack very fast and wrist follows through quickly. Sometimes it is helpful for the student to verbalize "uh, uh, uh." Keep fingers used in chords touching the key through attack and release, other fingers slightly lifted.

## Helpful Hints for Technique Expressed by Composers and Pedagogues

### Jean-Philippe Rameau

The following is an excerpt from Rameau's *Pieces de Clavecin* (p. 19).

First, it is necessary to sit at the harpsichord with the elbows higher than the level of the keyboard, so that the hand can drop on to the keyboard merely by the natural movement of the wrist joint.

It is so that the hand should drop as of itself on to the keyboard that the elbows have to be higher than the level of this latter, and they are never too high so long as the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> can rest on the edge of the keys.

At the same time as the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> touch the edge of the keys, the elbows must fall unconcernedly to the sides, into their natural position, a position which should be strictly observed and never disturbed unless absolutely essential, as when the player is compelled to carry his hand from one end of the keyboard to the other.

This natural position of the elbows, combined with the correct attitude of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, determines the position of any person, whatever his size, in relation to the harpsichord.

However, as has already been said, by dropping the hand, the fingers curl naturally to the necessary extent and they must then be neither extended nor curled any further, except in certain cases where one has no alternative.

The wrist must always be supple.

The movement of the fingers begins at their root, that is to say, at the point where they join the hand, and never anywhere else. That of the hand begins at the wrist joint, whilst that of the forearm, assuming that such a movement is necessary, begins at the elbow.

The fingers must drop on to the keys and not hit them: moreover, they must glide [*coulent: glide; flow; roll*], so to speak, from one key to the other when playing successive notes, which will give some idea of how gently one has to start.

From the finger with which you started, pass on to its neighbor and so on from one to the other...

Remember to make every finger act by its own particular movement, and see that the finger which releases a key always remains so close to it that it appears to be touching it.

When practicing *trills* or *shakes*, only those fingers which are in use should be raised as high as possible. However, as the movement becomes familiar, these fingers are raised less and less and the considerable movement employed at the outset is finally replaced by a movement which is light and brisk. Take great care not to rush the end of the trill in terminating it, for it will *close* naturally once one has grown accustomed to it.

WJ: Rameau's suggesting lifting the fingers above the keys while playing at a slow tempo can be excellent advice for starting new repertoire which will eventually attain a fast tempo. This helps the finger be more "set" and "swing to each key."

### **François Couperin**

"In order to be seated at the correct height, the underside of the elbows, wrists and the fingers must be all on one level: so one must choose a chair which agrees with this rule." (Couperin, p. 29)

WJ: Similar to thoughts by Rameau

### **C.P.E. Bach**

"When the performer is in the correct position with respect to height his forearms are suspended slightly above the fingerboard. In playing, the fingers should be arched and the muscles relaxed. The less these two conditions are satisfied, the more attention must be given to them." (C. P. E. Bach, p. 42)

"Stiffness hampers all movement, above all the constantly required rapid extension and contraction of the hands. All stretches, the omission of certain fingers, even the indispensable crossing of the fingers and turning of the thumb demand this elastic ability." (C. P. E. Bach, p. 42)

### **Josef Lhevinne**

"Some Things About Staccato: Staccato, considered as touch, is often marred by surface noises of the fingers tapping on the keys. A very simple expedient reduces this noise and increases the lightness and character of the staccato. It is merely the raising of the wrist. By raising the wrist, the stroke comes from a different angle, is lighter, but nonetheless secure and makes for ease in very fleet passages." (Lhevinne, pp. 35-36)

"Finger staccatos, produced by wiping the keys, are also effective when properly applied. There is also, of course, a kind of brilliant staccato, where the action of the whole forearm is involved. In this the wrist is held stiff." (Lhevinne, p. 36)

“Acquiring Velocity - Perhaps the best general principle is the acquisition of the habit of playing with an extremely loose, floating hand. Rigidity of muscles and velocity never go together.” (Lhevinne, p. 45)

## **Additional Quotations and Concepts Related to Natural Physical Gestures**

### **First finger joint firm—wrist relaxed**

“I don’t believe in total relaxation. When we’re totally relaxed, we are in bed asleep. If I pick up a handkerchief, I don’t have to tighten up some other part of my body, but I do have to have some tension in the hand...I differentiate between tension and intensity. I think of intensity as an emotional quality, whereas tension stifles freedom of feeling...The tension should be in the first finger joint, the joint having contact with the key. When we are young, our fingers often cave in due to weakness at the first joint. But weak first joints are ruinous. The first joints must be strengthened by proper exercises, stretching exercises or anything that will help to solidify the total tactile control. Furthermore, the wrist, which has eight bones in it and if not used enough will form small adhesions, must be malleable.”

— Adele Marcus (*Clavier*, Vol. XI, No. 6, September ’72), famous piano teacher formerly at Juilliard

“Without a firm support or base for his finger action, the pianist is in the position of a gardener who tries to weed with a rubber-handed hoe.”

— William S. Newman (*The Pianist’s Problems*, Harper and Row)

“Let the student be taught that he needs ‘strong and independent fingers, and a steel-like wrist,’ and from then on, all too often, his musical goose is cooked!”

— Abby Whiteside (*Mastering the Chopin Etudes*)

The Matthay concept is that it takes more energy to play the note than to hold the note. Hold the notes with the wrist and hand relaxed, but the first joints of each finger still able to keep the notes depressed. In a romantic style playing on a large tracker instrument, coupled manuals may become quite heavy. Try to control how much weight is needed to keep the notes depressed.

**2018 AGO National Convention, Kansas City, MO**  
**Dr. Wilma Jensen**

**Class II: Playing Pianistic Passages in Organ Repertoire**

**Organ Touches Influenced by Concepts of Piano Technique**  
**(Head, shoulders, knees, and toes!)**

Pianistic passages in organ repertoire generally demand physical gestures and control of touches as used similarly by pianists in piano performance. In advanced repertoire, there may be more extensive use of high and low ranges of the keyboard, and there may need to be more visible movement of the **torso** throughout. Relative dynamics and **voicing** in each hand may need to be quite prominent. Longer accents and more weight behind accents may need to be added to achieve the dramatic and intended effect.

In spite of every note in the range sounding the same dynamic within one organ registration, there are varying weights and lengths of notes for accent which need to be achieved. Each finger's varying speeds of attack and articulation all combine to assist in controlling the style needed for each passage. All of these factors assist in "organizing notes in space" to achieve the relative length of each note. Pianistic passages on the organ generally demand exaggerated physical motions – large rotations, extremely active fingers, added weight for accents of long duration. Physical crescendos need to happen on the organ as at the piano in order to encourage natural timing for accelerandos or ritardandos. The torso helps carry the body from place to place at the keyboard. I strongly believe that control of natural dynamics within the hands contributes greatly to sensitive timing and expression of the phrase.

In the Romantic Period, often melodic lines start after the beat, which can allow extra time for it to begin. In these cases, this means the bar line is **not** accented, meter may not be important, but melodic lines are allowed to be shaped in varying arches. The top notes within each arch can be stretched with each note being shaped in good proportion with the note before and the note after. The music flows through the downbeat, and then time is taken to start the new melodic line after the beat. Shaping melodic lines is critical, with the highest lines of the range stretched the most.

To keep excitement and continuous motion flowing when very fast passages occur, be sure one does not use the same fingering on every pattern; each fingering is followed by one that is different before repeating the original pattern again. Of course it is easier to remember if all the fingering is the same, but technically this can cause tension. The mind may like all the same fingering, but the body does not! Alternating fingering of different patterns increases the amount of physical activity, which contributes to facility and staying relaxed.

Pianists play with the weight on the outside of the hands; this allows the keyboardist to bring out melodic lines even through weak fingers 4 and 5. This also helps keep the thumb light and not heavy in proportion to the outer fingers. After practicing voicing this way, in time the weak fingers become much stronger while maintaining a light thumb and relaxed wrist. With every note sounding the same dynamic level at the organ, this voicing often seems unnecessary to organists. As a result, over time many organists develop a heavy thumb, tense wrists, and weak underdeveloped fingers 4 and 5. Also, when the texture of a composition becomes thick, this problem is often amplified. The heavy thumb and tight wrists are a great hindrance to facility. Remember that most French composers had very advanced piano techniques! Most of us organists did not have the kind of

quality training to prepare for the advanced organ repertoire we encounter. I believe the writings of pianists and piano pedagogues can assist organists greatly in accomplishing much more advanced technique and control.

## Reminders

- Fingers swing from the knuckles
- Practice with high, active fingers for later, facile playing
- Thumb moves laterally – do not lift the thumb to play, but rotate to the thumb
- It takes more energy to play the note than to hold the note (Matthay)
- All use of energy is followed by relaxation
- When first adding weight behind specific fingers, it may be necessary to take much extra time to accomplish it.
- Sometimes a single accented, forte note can propel fingers through facile, lighter passages that follow.
- Initially it is sometimes helpful to exaggerate the length of accents but later reduce the time to a more natural length.
- When first practicing a trill or shake, remember Rameau suggests raising the fingers high for later facility (see page 1 of Class I notes).
- Practice your composition completely out of order, with multiple starting places. Play the last line, next to last line, etc. After knowing those starting places, choose different spots to start. Additionally, practice one measure at a time to the next measure's downbeat. The above is all about discovering a good balance between **Motor Memory** and **Mind Memory**. This is essential for gaining real confidence in performance.

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