

AMERICAN

Review page 31

MUSIC TEACHER

The Official Journal of Music Teachers National Association

January/July 2014



sounds in No. 4. The harmony is tonal and fairly predictable, with common meters (e.g., 2/4, 3/8, 4/4 and so on) predominating. In addition to quarters, eighths and sixteenth notes, triplets and dotted rhythms are used tastefully and add variety. Touches are varied, legato, staccato—at times both used together in separate hands, and forms include simple sonata form, minuet, rondo, and theme and variations.

Two- and three-part textures dominate in all four of the *Sonatinas*, except for No. 2 III, which is in four parts. Two are in C major and two in G major, with No. 4 being slightly more difficult than the other three, due to the challenging rhythm and some quick left-hand jumps. The first three have three movements, and the fourth has two. One of my favorites is No. 2, III Rondo, because of its jaunty feel, a result of the use of dotted rhythm.

Some challenges presented by these *Sonatinas* are independence of hands, balance of melody and accompaniment, fingering (which needs careful attention) and tonal control for shap-

ing dynamics. One strength of this edition is its very clean and easy-to-read format, with an attractive artistic cover, highlighted by a copy of a well-known painting, which, unfortunately, is not credited anywhere in the collection. Kjos's editions have used excellent visual art on the cover of several earlier musical collections by a variety of composers. This is commendable and a wonderful opportunity for students to recognize and appreciate good visual art. Why not let students and teachers know who the artists are and when they lived?

The Four Sonatinas, Opus 39 would be useful for recitals, auditions and as sight reading for students needing material at the intermediate level. *Reviewed by Myrna Capp, Seattle, Washington.*

Books

The Craft of Piano Playing: A New Approach to Piano Technique, by Alan Fraser. Scarecrow Press (4720 Boston Way, Lanham, MD 20706), 2003. 448 pp., \$34.95.

Alan Fraser has written a formidable and insightful volume on piano technique. Using the Feldenkreis Method as his foundation, he has presented 417 articulate and often eloquent pages. It is not an easy read, for there is so much to absorb. Indeed, a course based on the content of this book alone, especially the lengthy first section, strikes me as a possibility for a pedagogy teacher.

Fraser divides his book into three sections. The first he calls "The Foreground: Pianistic Problems in Musical Craft." It is truly a book in itself, with much attention paid to economy of motion, developing a good legato and concepts of a reliable physical approach to the keyboard. He stresses hand structure, finger articulation, arm activity and finger shape. There is an excellent discussion on legato. And he stresses brilliantly the benefits of cultivating effective stillness—bravo for addressing this issue! Fraser is not afraid to address many perplexing problems students and teachers alike face in the standard repertoire. In particular, I would mention his short but valuable discussion of tremolando octaves in



SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

World-class city, exceptional faculty, intimate class settings and over 350 performance opportunities annually



BACHELOR OF MUSIC AND MUSIC DIPLOMA

Composition (BM only)
Guitar
Keyboard Instruments
Orchestral Instruments
Voice

MASTER OF MUSIC

Chamber Music
Composition
Conducting
Guitar
Keyboard Instruments
Orchestral Instruments
Piano Accompanying
Voice

ARTIST CERTIFICATE

Chamber Music

POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN VOCAL PERFORMANCE

PROFESSIONAL STUDIES DIPLOMA IN INSTRUMENTAL PERFORMANCE

REGIONAL AUDITIONS

Boston
Chicago
Houston
Interlochen
New York City
Oberlin

*Scholarship and financial aid
available for qualified students*

OFFICE OF ADMISSION

1201 Ortega Street
San Francisco CA 94122-4498
Tel. 415.759.3431
admit@sfc.edu • www.sfc.edu

Beethoven's Sonata No. 3 in C Major, Op. 2, and the "Pathétique" Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 13 (pages 121–122), and his excellent discussion about practicing the opening arpeggios in the "Appassionata" Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57. Of special interest, too, is the brief chapter on "The Phil Cohen Arm-Swing Exercise." His discussions of "The Underlying Musical Purpose of Arm Movement" and his comments on "Forearm Rotation in Liszt" (with special attention to *Jeux d'eau* and *La Campanella*) are as clear and sensible as anything one would wish to read. Fully aware I am skipping vast amounts of material in this large first section, I would focus on the charming chapter titled "The Feldenkreis-Horowitz Connection." Using principles of Moshe Feldenkreis's method, Fraser probes Horowitz's astounding mechanical genius, postulating that while Horowitz had no knowledge of Feldenkreis, he nevertheless arrived at some of Feldenkreis's ideas "solely through his intention to realize his artistic conception" (pages 281–282).

Section two he calls, "The

Middleground: Some General Aspects of Musical Craft." Here the focus is on rhythm, phrasing and orchestration. There are many valuable suggestions throughout this shorter section, but of greatest interest is the chapter on orchestration and his lesson on the Rachmaninoff Etude Tableau No. 5 in E-flat Minor, Op. 39. In the closing paragraphs, here dealing with the Rachmaninoff Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 18, the first movement's second theme, he stresses the contrapuntal element in the left hand. It truly is wonderful to read these comments from a musician who realizes that left-hand "Alberti basses" and their myriad derivations are far more than filler and motion, containing melodic elements that must be highlighted.

The third section is titled "The Background: Tell a Story." Here, Fraser addresses the emotional content of music, and his discussion of J.S. Bach's Prelude in B Minor from Book 1 of the Well-Tempered Clavier is fine. He bases his ideas on the concept, stated at the top of page 364, that in this and other contrapuntal music, interpretations

result from "a continuous fluctuation between dissonant tension and consonant relaxation." He further suggests that interpretive strategies be sensitive to the clever juxtaposition of legato and staccato/portato, to place stresses on dissonances and the approaches to a dissonance, and relax the dynamic as the melody flows into a consonant tone. In the chapter entitled "You Must Be Willing and Able To Live Emotionally When You Play," he advocates creating a program for the music. Of course, this was a nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century teaching technique that sometimes ran amok. (Hans von Buelow's fanciful explanation of the Chopin Preludes immediately springs to mind.) But going to the other extreme, as we have in the latter part of the last century, produces technically inadequate or colorless performances. The discussion of this concept revolving around his work with a non-responsive student on the Chopin Ballade in F Major, Op. 38, is bound to raise some eyebrows among this book's readers.

And that brings me to a word of warning. This book is not—I repeat,

Rice University

The Shepherd School of Music

Robert Yekovich, Dean

Piano Faculty

Brian Connelly

Jeanne Kierman Fischer

Jon Kimura Parker

Robert Roux

C. Dean Shank, Jr.

With a dedicated faculty of gifted artists, extraordinary student ensembles, beautiful facilities, and an affordable education from one of America's premiere universities, The Shepherd School of Music creates an environment for musical and intellectual growth that is critical to professional success.



RICE

For admission and scholarship information please contact: Matthew Loden, Associate Director of Music Admissions, The Shepherd School of Music, Rice University
Post Office Box 1892 Houston, Texas 77251 713-348-4854 www.rice.edu/music
Rice University is an EO/AA institution.

not a self-help method. While thoroughly readable, it requires much thought. A teacher should read it carefully before applying it in his teaching. In the discussion on emotionality, for example, Fraser admits his frustration with the student who "couldn't get it" regarding the Ballade. It can be frightening to a student to urge them on beyond their emotional capacities. Some students simply have not developed emotionally to the point where they can "feel" the anguish of the "Presto con fuoco" section of the F-Major Ballade. I have made that error far too many times in my own teaching to not at least be sensitive to the dangerous territory emotionality can explore. But then, repertoire choice is critical here. Maybe Fraser could have reached this student with a less "fear-some" work in preparation for the Ballade. The examples he explores are all, without exception, from the top-of-the-line concert repertoire: difficult works such as Liszt's *La Campanella* and *Feux Follets*, the aforementioned Rachmaninoff and Beethoven pieces, Scriabin's Etude No. 5 in C-sharp

Minor, Op. 42, and so forth. So, the teacher working with younger students might find his book of great interest, but not as useful in her teaching. And, of course, any instruction dealing with the physical at the piano requires great sensitivity on the part of the teacher who is applying the methods with students—each psyche and hand is individual and unique.

With these gentle caveats, I am pleased to recommend Fraser's book on *The Craft* (Also the ART?) of *Piano Playing*. Reviewed by Louis Nagel, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Prokofiev—A Biography: From Russia to the West, 1891–1935, by David Nice. Yale University Press (P.O. Box 209040, New Haven, CT 06520-9040), 2003. 390 pp., \$35.

In *Prokofiev—A Biography: From Russia to the West*, the British scholar David Nice offers a new biography of the brilliant pianist-composer based on Prokofiev's autobiographies, diaries and correspondence, including sources from Russian archives that only recently have become available for research. This

volume focuses on Prokofiev's career from his early years as a student at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and the period from 1918 to 1935. During this period he left Russia to perform and compose in Europe and America, returning to the Soviet Union very few times. The author intends to cover the remainder of Prokofiev's career in a subsequent volume titled *The Soviet Years*. Throughout the book Nice disputes various misconceptions depicted in an earlier biography written by Nestyev, a Soviet musicologist who considered Western influences on Prokofiev decadent. The timely release of this publication coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of Prokofiev's death.

The present volume is particularly valuable for its in-depth coverage providing insight into Prokofiev's innovations as a composer shaping new concepts of music strongly rooted in the Russian tradition, while absorbing the dynamic changes in the modern world. Nice offers vivid descriptions of Prokofiev's important works from all genres. These descriptions, though, serve a limited purpose. They inspire

Educating Musicians for Today and Tomorrow

School of Music



Undergraduate degrees:

- Performance
- Music education
- Theory
- Composition

Graduate degrees:

- Performance
- Piano pedagogy
- History and Literature
- Theory
- Composition
- Music education

Scholarships available

Dr. Timothy Blair, Dean
School of Music - Swope Hall
West Chester University
West Chester, PA 19383

For Information:

610-436-2739

Email

tblair@wcupa.edu

www.wcupa.edu



Expect
Excellence

West Chester University
of PENNSYLVANIA