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A System of Technical Studies in PEDAL PLAYING For the Organ

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Τc

MR. OSCAR BOLANDER

TEACHER AT THE

ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC, STOCKHOLM

This Work is Dedicated

By his friend

THE AUTHOR

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PREFACE

🕅 N the course of a private teaching experience extending over several years, the attention of the author was early drawn to the deficiency which characterizes all contemporary instruction-books for the organ

in the matter of pedal technique. In all the organ-schools consulted by the author he has found the pedal exercises wanting in system and completeness. For most musical instruments we can point to thorough and comprehensive instruction-books; but the majestic Organ, in spite of its widespread employment and boundless capabilities, is still without one, at least in so far as it should include a systematic pedal-school χ corresponding to its incomparably superior sister the manual-school, which has of late years profited by the improved facilities for a thorough Aucation in pianoforte technique. Again, the Whighly developed piano-playing of the present day promotes, in a general way, rapid execution on the manuals of the organ, with results that would \mathcal{R} be called pleasing if the pedals had never been invented, and Bach and Händel had never lived; provided, of course, that the player has acquired a beautiful and flowing legato; and so we must not be surprised at the praise often lavished by the ignorant upon one or the other of these manual virtuosi; for if only he possess advanced pianoforte technique and a fair share of imagination, he has the whole art of modern organbuilding at his disposal, ready to help with all its varied effects in hiding the gaping defects of his piano-bred organ-playing. It is a melancholy fact that only very few eminent organists since 6906

Bach's time have made it their business to lift pedal-playing cut of its primitive confusion, although Bach, Buxtehude and Händel,* in their beautiful and expressive pedal passages, have given the world unsurpassable examples of the material on which to base a well-ordered pedal technique. In spite, therefore, of the respect due to such masters as Kittel, Rinck, Töpfer, Hesse, Abbé Vogler, and others, we are not entitled to grant them any credit for improvement in the system of playing on the pedals, as far at least as can be judged by the organ-schools which they have left behind. Vogler, indeed, did not disdain in his notorious organ-recitals to let the pedals play the part of a pulping-mill and a thunder-machine; an absurd proceeding which is by no means without parallel in the organ-playing of our own day.

Among the many causes which hamper pedalling from the player's side, by no means the least important are those which result from the technical difficulties of classical organ-music; and it must be admitted that to become a Bach-player of any account demands a pedal technique which is by no means to be acquired from any of the above-named organ-schools. A frequent result is, that organists often estimate the merits of classical compositions in a one-sided and partial manner, each judging from his own artistic standpoint; some have been found to liken the incomparable works of a genius like Sebastian Bach to a parish church, and Adolph Hesse's trivial compositions

^{*} The author must refer to the modern editions of Händel's music, with obbligato pedal; English organs of that day had no pedals, and the Concerto in Bb, No. 7 in English editions, is the only work in which Händel included a separate staff for the pedals.-TRANSLATOR.

to a cathedral (among gentlemen of this kidney classical music will hardly meet with its rights); and if in addition we remark that most parish organs are unluckily furnished only with couplingpedals, and those of incomplete compass, on which no obbligato pedal-part can be played, the above comparison between Bach and Hesse appears even more crude and paradoxical; since, to speak truly, Hesse's organ-works (and the execution they demand) are mere trifles compared to the masterpieces of the giants Buxtehude and Bach.

While the author has endeavored to show the shortcomings of all the organ-schools bequeathed to us by the above-named masters, he regards it as a pleasant duty to acknowledge the Organ-School of J. Lemmens as a welcome exception; for this work, breaking away as it does at once from the tramping method of former days, may with justice be called a school of reform in pedalling. It would have been most desirable that the pedal section of this organschool should have been systematically extended to the stage of advanced technique; but since it does, in spite of its limitations; indicate clearly the new path, it only remains for the acquirement of a technique adequate to modern needs to faithfully follow and develop the sound principles of execution which are revealed in Lemmens' Organ-School.

Courtesy demands the explanation that, in speaking of "the defective organ-schools of the older masters," we refer only to the pedal sections. Manual-playing is properly taken care of in all of them.

After unceasing thought on all these matters, the author has decided to publish these "Technical Studies in Pedal-playing," in the hope that they may prove a help to all honest playing; being convinced that those institutions whose aim is to promote the study of the Organ will fully apprecrate every honest attempt to further the object they have in view.

THE AUTHOR.

PART I. INSTRUCTIONS

THE PEDALS AND THEIR EMPLOYMENT

By the Pedals (from the Latin *pes*, a foot; or, perhaps more correctly, from *pedalis*, of or belonging to the feet) is here signified that special department of the organ, invented by Bernard the German about 1450, of which the keyboard, having a compass of something over two octaves, is played with the feet, and has keys of a shape suited to this purpose. The true function of the pedals is to supply to the manuals an independent or obbligato bass part.

To employ the pedals, in season and out of season, as a mere strengthening part, to make them serve a base and homophonic drudgery, by doubling the manual bass in the octave below, is such a misuse, and shows such poverty of invention, that it ought to be avoided in all good organ-music, though the modern exponents of extempore playing resort to it only too often; there are,

it is true, some occasions when this use of the pedals is impressive and quite justified, but these occur only in accompaniments, especially in those of masses, chorales, hymns, and the like; never, or very rarely, in polyphony or in independent organ-music. Excellent guidance in this matter has been furnished us in the works of Buxtehude, Bach, Händel, Albrechtsberger, and many others. Unfortunately, the poor, starved, homophonic use of the pedals has had a similar influence on the art of organ-building, insomuch that builders have been led to adopt the equally poor, starved "coupling-pedals," which tend considerably to hinder the progress of sound organ-playing. It is to be hoped that improved pedal technique, honest playing and contrapuntal training will before long effect the abolition of coupling-pedals in favor of the independent pedal organ.

GENERAL EXPLANATION

The student is advised not to accompany his pedal exercises in unison on the manual, as experience shows that this form of practising is not to be recommended.

To acquire at the same time certainty in attack and rapid execution, every note played by a foot not previously engaged should be struck with the foot parallel to the key, as shown in the following diagram; and it is most important that the angular movements of the feet, both from heel and toe, should be made in conformity with the diagonal lines marked across the pedals, those in Fig. 1 being for intervals of a second, and those in Fig. 2 for thirds. The marks for the left foot are placed below the staff; those for the right foot, above it.



The difference between the angles through which the foot meves, in the intervals of a second and a third respectively, renders it plainly necessary to practise each of them separately with extreme strictness, taking great care that the angular movements (especially the more difficult) are performed slowly at first, but with unfailing correctness, in accordance with the positions indicated by the diagonal lines in the above drawings; and the student must work thus through the given exercises in progressive order; the pace may afterwards be gradually increased.

These angular movements for seconds and thirds, when combined in the same passage, form so important a part of the student's technique, that we here present several specimen diagrams, demonstrating to the eye the nature of this class of difficulty. Thus, in Fig. 3, A shows the appearance which a passage will bear when the first note is played with the toe; B gives the reversed appearance of the same figure, when the passage of notes printed below is commenced with the heel; while the more elaborate figure at C illustrates a more complex design produced by the mixture of seconds and thirds. The reverse of this figure C might be produced by beginning the passage with the heel, as A is reversed at B. In performing these mixed passages of seconds and thirds, the feet reach several different positions, some more forward on the keys, some farther back, owing to the different size of the arc traversed in executing the various intervals. In A and B two such different positions are reached; in C three, the third position being the farthest back.



Special attention must be paid to such sequences as those in Fig. 4 (which rarely occur except when playing in octaves), on account of the shifting of position which they involve. Fig. A shows the impossibility of carrying out such a passage without sliding the foot along the key; while B shows how this sliding is to be effected. And here also the figure will assume a reversed appearance if the passage is commenced with the toe instead of the heel.



On all keyed instruments there are certain steps from one key to another which are the same in size, though the musical intervals they represent may be different; this is seen in Figs. 5 and 6. Since the feet, unlike the hands, cannot enlarge or diminish their stretch, it follows that more importance attaches to observing the actual size of steps on the pedals than on the manuals.

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F1G. 5.

Compare the printed notes with the pedal diagrams.





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F1G. 6.

Compare the printed notes with the pedal diagrams.

In the pedal diagrams in Figs. 7, 8, 9, 10, are shown the movements of the feet in similar arpeggios in different keys. It must, however, be remarked that the example in Fig. 8 cannot well be executed on the pedalboards now in use, since their construction, as before observed, is not adapted for perfectly systematic pedalplaying.

A comparison in each case of the notes with the pedal diagram will show the importance of the latter to the student of technique.



F1G. 7.



FIG. 8.

FIG. 9.



Many more explanations of the same character, which must be omitted here, are nevertheless of such value, that a future generation, more interested in the subject, will doubtless work them out and accord them due attention; but the examples given above will furnish a clear and distinct indication of the principles of a scientifically built-up pedal technique.

To keep the movements of the feet as small and as natural as possible is the first and most important condition of ready execution on the pedals.

EXPLANATION OF THE EXERCISES

SECTION I

A. Exercises in Diatonic Seconds, FOR Each Foot Alone

In these exercises, from No. 1 to No. 12 inclusive, the toe strikes the accented notes; and the exercises should be practised again, with the heel on the notes previously struck by the toe.

B. Exercises with Notes Repeated on an Accent

Exercises 13 to 18 include repeated notes, which the beginner is apt to strike noisily; this mistake must be corrected, and the exercises performed with such suppleness as to avoid making a clatter on the keys, and also to connect the notes into a satisfactory legato.

C. Exercises in which the Foot Advances by Taking a New Position

The exercises from No. 18 to No. 24 include repeated notes on which the foot advances into a new position. After each group of notes under a slur the foot is to be considered free; hence, the next note is to be struck with the foot parallel to the key, and only afterwards must the foot be turned sideways. These exercises, like those under A, must be repeated with the places of heel and toe reversed.

D. EXERCISES IN DIATONIC THIRDS, FOR EACH FOOT ALONE

These must be treated like the preceding exercises. It must be remarked that pedal practice demands shoes with specially light soles, and that heels of the French type, which are under the middle of the foot, are out of the question when performing such exercises as these The constant habit among beginners of commencing a passage with the foot diagonally across the keys has to be frequently corrected by the teacher. The attack with the foot askew is very seldom called for in passages for one foot alone; though in passages for both feet, the straight and the skew positions may both be used in turn with full justification, as will be explained later.

E. Exercises on Mixed Seconds and Thirds, for Each Foot Alone

In several of these exercises the foot has to slide a little in order to keep it in a middle position (see Fig. 3). The backward movement of the foot may, however, in a few cases be allowed to extend even to the third position on the long keys. Such exceptional cases as are shown in Figs. 7 and 9 (above) do not apply, as regards the position of the feet and the attack with the toe askew, to exercises like the present.

F. Chromatic Exercises for Each Foot Alone

The sliding motion which occurs in these exercises is from the sloping end of the sharp key to the next following natural key. Even here the correct design of the pedals is of importance; for if the sharp keys are cut off square at the end, the keys are more likely to rattle than if their ends are sloped. If the pedals are carefully bushed with felt, and their surfaces are even and smoothly polished, it will be highly conducive to noiseless execution and easy sliding from one key to another.

SECTION II

A. Exercises for Both Feet Together

The aim of these exercises in contrary motion with varied footing is partly to promote increased facility in what was acquired previously, and at the same time to prepare the way for what is to follow.

It is especially important that these exercises should not be laid aside until a rapid tempo has been attained with every variety of footing.

B. Solid and Broken Octaves

A difficulty occurs here which is not so easily surmounted as might be supposed at first sight. For here, as in all octave-playing on the pedals, the rule holds good without exception, that the first attack of the feet, and the subsequent side-movements, must be symmetrical and simultaneous. In other words, whether the heels move or the toes, they must at all points in the arc which they describe keep precisely the same distance between them. This rule applies not only to exercises in solid or simultaneous octaves, but in a still higher degree to those in broken octaves; for by this method of practice, conscientiously carried out, the student may acquire a technical facility which will exceed all his expectations. The same rules apply equally to thirds and sixths, both broken and solid. To ensure retaining the regularity of the motions of the feet when playing broken intervals, it is recommended that the student go through the solid intervals of the same kind every second or third time, and pay good heed that the angular movements of the feet are simultaneous in the broken no less than in the solid intervals.

The student is advised to do his utmost to secure a true legato; such a legato, that is, as results from pressing every key down to its full extent, and joining every sound in the legato phrase closely to the next one. There is another kind of legato, which may be called a

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light legato, which floats, as it were, on the top of the keys, and results in pressing them only halfway down; and it is much to be deplored that this half-legato, which produces an inferior tone from the organ, has often become a deeply rooted habit, under lazy and thoughtless teaching. Without a firm legato, true organ-playing becomes inconceivable.

It is likewise to be observed that the student, before he has mastered a true legato, manifests at first a tendency to hold the accented notes beyond their proper length; this error is illustrated in full in the following example:



whereas, when the above fault has been corrected, the passage will regain its original appearance, as shown below:



The absolute superiority of the method proposed in the present work over the older ones does not lie in the construction of the exercises so much as in the manner of practising them. The one aim of the technical

directions given in the whole of this Part is to attain, by means of the smallest and most natural movements, to a smooth execution, to accuracy, to rapidity, and to a true legato.

SECTION III

This Section, which consists of free adaptations from the previous one, attempts to show how and when deviations from the previous rules may be allowed.

Such a case occurs in Ex. A 3, an exception in footing, 16906

inasmuch as the feet move on one degree to a new position before they find it necessary to use any angular motion. That this movement is an advantageous exception to the rule can be proved experimentally by a thorough trial of both methods.

When the pupil reaches Exs. 15 and 16, he will find further proofs of the wisdom of such exceptional footings, though they by no means invalidate the general application of the original rule.

In B there likewise occur footings which involve a mixture of angular motion with change of position; and Exs. C, Nos. 27, 28, 29, are planned for acquiring accuracy in moving the whole foot onwards. Here the pupil is apt to swing his feet about needlessly, a fault which calls for correction.

In Exs. 30, 31 occurs mixed legato and staccato, in conjunction with a mixed footing partly of angular

staccato must, like all organ staccato, be so performed that the keys are pressed down as far as they will go, and the legato (as before mentioned) must be a true legato.

motion and partly of moving the whole foot. The

Section D consists entirely of exercises for changing the feet on one key, in passages both of single and double notes; the clearness of such passages, however, depends much upon the proper construction of the pedal-board. Such exercises are intended merely for the improvement of execution, for no good organ-music would contain passages like these.

SECTION IV

MAJOR SCALES A.

The footing of these, as well as of the minor scales, is, in the main, the same as that employed by J. Lemmens in his Organ-School; but since the pedal scales in the present work have been considerably extended in length by varying their outlines, in order that the pupil might net lay them aside too soon, it has been found necessary to modify the footing in several places.

It will, therefore, be both useful and necessary to give a few analytical demonstrations of those alterations of footing which have been suggested by experience as conducive to improved technique, together with some remarks on the footing of scales in general.





That the footing at (a) has come to be regarded as a mere solecism in the light of our ideas, is due to Lemmens and the reform founded by him upon truth and nature; for, had it not been for this pioneer of truth, the adepts in the old double-shuffle footing might have rested content with their unintelligent method for a long time to come. Lemmens' footing is shown at (b) and the author's at (c).

The footing at (c), which provides for a strict legato not only for the scale in its entirety, but also for the part played by each foot separately, as shown at (d), is alone adapted for rapid execution.

As another example of the improved footing, the scale of B flat major is given:



(The old footing is not given, as being altogether impracticable.)



Lemmens' footing is shown at (e) and the author's at (f).

The footing at (f) is not only calculated for strict legato, as proved at (g), but also affords variety in scale-practice, as shown in the examples at (h).

Having adopted a certain form of scale-passage as

the normal formula for practice in all keys alike, we have next to determine the footing for each scale as framed on this formula; but the footing will be subject to partial modification in cases where the scale is altered or extended so as to differ from the formula, as in the following example:





Both in scales and in other melodic passages, that footing is to be preferred which will give the closest legato for the separate part played by each foot; and this should be, for every thoughtful pupil, the universal principle on which to base a reliable pedal-technique.

There is one other movement of the foot, which has been purposely left till the last; namely, gliding from one sharp key to the next. These gliding movements must be practised in such a way that the attack on the second key, on to which we glide, is, if possible, made as firmly as any other attack. Sliding movements of this kind are, in spite of the most diligent practice, always uncertain in rapid passages. An improved construction of the pedals is the only means by which they could be rendered superfluous.*

Β. MELODIC MINOR SCALES

The technical principles of construction and footing in these scales is in the main the same as in the major, and thus a description of them is superfluous.

С. HARMONIC MINOR SCALES

As the independent nature of these scales is much contested, the author intends to avoid entering into any details concerning them but such as bear upon Technique; in this respect these scales are well worthy of consideration.

That the pupil may accustom himself to the recognized form of this scale, all accidental chromatic signs are omitted, and are replaced throughout, in the signature, by those which by themselves proclaim the construction of the scale.

In conclusion, the author feels bound to exhort the student who seeks to progress in pedal-playing, by help of these studies, to ponder carefully the above technical rules and demonstrations, that he may, by means of them, and still more by the use of his own intellect, become master of a method eminently based upon nature and upon scientific truth; for the exercises alone will not suffice, since these present only a series of passages for practice with marks for footing, but do not teach how to practise the passages to advantage.

A FEW WORDS ON THE MUSICAL EDUCATION OF ORGAN STUDENTS

The student who is gifted with musical talent and a turn for playing the organ, and who wishes to train himself in that art, must as early as possible work through the most important pianoforte studies, and only after this may proceed to the special study on the organ of the grand style of music which belongs to that sublime instrument, for which no piano studies, even those of the most general application, are sufficient.

It will be of great use to the intending organ pupil, if his future study of the organ is so far taken into account that, during the latter part of his pianoforte studies, his teacher on that instrument will give the preference to work in the polyphonic style.

This, however, is only that he may understand and become habituated to the independent motion of parts which belongs to polyphonic music; it is by no means advisable (though we find it done occasionally) to practise organ-music on the piano, making use of the strict legato, the substitution of fingers and other characteristics which are called for only on the manuals of the organ.

Pianoforte-playing must on the one side preserve its genuine independent style as much as organ-playing on the other; especially as the organist, for economic reasons, is often forced to rely more on the former than on the latter.

Since it is the privilege of the organist more than of any other musician to be the exponent of the maiestic Fugue to a public whose musical culture is ever increasing, it is only reasonable that these expounders of fugue should, during their student days, enjoy a thorough course of instruction in harmony, counterpoint, canon, and fugue, and should diligently apply themselves thereto. The organist with whom this knowledge is lacking can never turn to full account his technical powers, however great they may be; while his conception of his music, if he lacks musical scholarship, can never show a spark of ideality.

Besides the technical and scientific training which is demanded by the organ, with its elaborate and scholastic style of music, the student must also make a study of his grand instrument itself; and this must by no means confine itself to a mere knowledge of the pitch of stops as reckoned in feet, their qualities, titles, and powers alone or in combination; but must extend to the construction, action, and material of the pipes, the windchest, the reservoirs, bellows, windtrunks, couplers, and pneumatics both of manual and pedal, both of draw-stop action and key-action.

Every organ candidate who is thoroughly equipped in the above subjects possesses a musical education which will make him a credit to the institution which Such a player may rightly be grants him his degree. placed in charge of a really fine organ; for the art of which he is master will return a full reward to the congregation which honors him with an appointment.

^{*} TRANSLATOR'S NOTE .--- This "gliding" is performed as follows: While the foot is on the first key, raise slightly that side of the foot which is nearest to the second key; then, if the pedals are as smooth as they should be, it is easy to slide the foot from one to the other.



Section I. Exercises for Each Foot Alone. A. Long Trills.



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Section II. A. Exercises for Both Feet Together.











B. Double - Pedalling in Octaves.
























































































C. Octave Exercises with Skips of a Third.







































































Section III.

A. Exercises on Mixed Intervals.



























































B. Exercises with Mixed Figures.



C. Miscellaneous Exercises.

(For heels alone, or for toes alone.)





Section IV.







B. Melodic Minor Scales.







C. Harmonic Minor Scales.*



* The accidental for the raised seventh is added after the signature, in brackets (#) or (ψ). 16906



