HOW TO PASS MUSIC EXAMINATIONS

A GUIDE
FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

BY

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AUTHOR OF "A MANUAL OF CONDUCTING," ETC.

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FOREWORD

THIS book, the only one of its kind in existence as far as the author is aware, has been written in the hope that it will furnish a scientific inquiry into the examination system, in its special bearings on the problems of the music teacher and student, and be a guide to the best and speediest way to prepare for examinations.

Whether they agree with the system or not, teachers and students—in fact all who are concerned, actively or otherwise, with the study of music—are bound to admit that the examination system has taken firm root in the training of musicians to-day.

It has been my aim, therefore, in the present work to reduce the preparation for musical examinations to something as near a constructive science as is possible with a subject admittedly not free from defects that are inherently inseparable from its consideration. The work is so arranged as to be of service to candidates, no matter what the particular examination in view may be or the grade of difficulty.

If the present book eases the burdens of the

candidate and assists him in the task of concentration and the methodical preparation of a course of study, it will have fulfilled the intentions of its author.

REID STEWART.

GLASGOW,
December, 1932.

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HOW TO PASS MUSIC EXAMINATIONS

CHAPTER I

THE EXAMINATION SYSTEM

THE examination system has been with us so long, and its merits and shortcomings canvassed so frequently, without ever undermining the position of examinations in the scheme of musical education, that it is a matter for surprise that no text-book has previously been written, dealing with examinations from a constructive point of view.

The value of examinations has been debated from time immemorial, yet no one seems able to suggest any practical alternative. It has been argued by those opposed to the system that examinations tend to destroy natural interest by supplying a rigid curriculum; that they encourage undue specialization at too early a stage; that they stuff the candidate's mind with ready-made opinions; that they encourage cramming rather than absorbing knowledge. So far as the procedure at examinations is concerned, while most critics admit that the tests are now carried on under the fairest conditions, some aver that the questions

are unfair and do not always represent that knowledge which is of most worth, and that examiners differ considerably in requirements. Other critics, proceeding mainly on psychological grounds, complain that failure often has a disastrous mental effect on the unsuccessful candidate, and that conversely, success often imbnes the winning candidate with a false sense of his own importance.

But, strong as some of these objections may seem, they have not succeeded in convincing the majority of musicians that examinations are radically unsound. In the opinion of those most qualified to judge, the importance of a well-conducted system of examinations cannot be overestimated. Not only does the examination standard call for a special effort and a consequent discipline which otherwise would be completely wanting, but it also provides a test of the progress of the pupil. It searches for flaws, and indicates particular shortcomings and weaknesses. Among younger students especially, the element of competition which is inseparable from the examination, brings with it an added zest which is all to the good, inspiring, as it does, greater interest and enthusiasm.

Because of the comparatively high standard of performance required at reputable examinations, the candidate knows that if he wishes to pass, he will need to offer a perfect performance. The

necessary period of preparation provides an artistic and technical equipment which would, in the great majority of cases, never be acquired at all in the absence of some such compulsitor as an examination in the background.

Furthermore, the examination system certainly tends to improve the standard of teaching generally. Obviously, the teacher who has repeated failures will suffer in public esteem when compared with the one who has as many successful candidates to his credit. The great advantage to be derived from an expert examiner giving an unbiased opinion on the work of the candidate is as much the judgment of the teacher's methods as the pupil's achievement. Some music teachers make a habit of sending in "reports" to parents on their children's progress every term. But often in these cases such a report is not a fair test of abilities and talents; as the teacher is his own judge, the test is largely a farce. The opinion of an outsider is far more reliable, and this alone is an argument clearly in support of the examination system.

The Abuse of Examinations.

That the examination system can be, and often is in fact, abused is only in the nature of things. Some of these abuses are merely the by-products of careless teaching methods, or the consequences of "cramming," while others again are inherent

in the system. Yet it would hardly be fair to condemn the entire system of examinations because of a few shortcomings.

A good deal of the misuse of examinations is due to thoughtlessness in the first instance. Naturally, the examination, calling as it does for a special period of intensive, disciplined study, tends to confine the candidate's activities to work connected only with the examination requirements as set forth in the syllabus. If the pupil does nothing but the work detailed in the curriculum, then his outlook is confined within a rather narrow path. This objection is not very serious when we take into consideration the fact that all modern examinations require evidence of satisfactory powers of sight-reading, which assures the examiner that a good proportion of the candidate's time has been spent in "reading," rather than in confining himself to the chosen test pieces.

For some types of mentality, the examination, with its suggestion of a nervous ordeal, reacts very badly, in the same way perhaps as a dentist's surgery reacts on nervous subjects. It would be absurd to suggest, however, that because certain people become ill when confronted with a dentist, therefore dentistry ought to be compulsorily abolished!

Yet, the teacher would do well to consider the case of the nervous subject and avoid rushing such students into examinations where more harm is likely to result than good.

One of the evils arising out of the examination system is the bogus college. That such institutions exist merely to snatch fees from guileless candidates is undeniable. At the same time it is foolish to go to extremes, as some musicians do, and hold that only the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music ought to be permitted to award diplomas.

The candidate should decide for himself which diploma or degree is likely to prove of most assistance, and for this purpose should acquire the syllabus of the leading colleges, and after comparing their various requirements, determine which will prove most suitable in his own case. A list of representative institutions is appended to the present chapter.

The Value of Musical Degrees.

The chief value of the musical degree is that it provides a qualification, a definite hall-mark of efficiency. In these days of specialization, the public demands evidence of education and first-class training, and this is usually only available through the possession of one or more of the recognized diplomas.

The value of these degrees lies in the faith which the public at large reposes in them as evidence of qualifications and musical training. Furthermore, most examinations conducted nowadays under the auspices of responsible bodies are more than

tests of mere knowledge of musical technique and learning. The examiners take into consideration such factors as suitability of the candidates as far as general education is concerned, reliability, adaptability, mental alertness, smartness, presence of mind, etc. This tends to eliminate potential musicians, without these abilities, from actively engaging in the profession.

The examination system, too, has proven a boon to women in the musical profession. Women musicians have very frequently had to fight against blind, unreasoning prejudice. Not the least disadvantage has been the fact that, in years past, especially among orchestral players, the slander has been constantly repeated that women are unable to hold their own in orchestras. Now that many women hold important qualifications obtained under the most stringent examination conditions in open competition with male candidates, it is being realized that women are equally as capable as men.

There are many openings where women are favoured more than men: as, for example, in preparatory schools as music mistresses. Here a degree is a necessary qualification.

The Higher Examinations.

It is for the candidate to decide ultimately which shall be his choice of degree. Among the important colleges it is hard to say which carries

the greater weight professionally. Many teachers find that a combination of degrees, such as F.R.C.O. (Fellow of the Royal College of Organists), L.R.A.M. (Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music), and A.R.C.M. (Associate of the Royal College of Music) is by far the most useful in practice.

The more difficult the standard of examination, the more useful the qualification will be professionally. Indeed, some of the degrees (for instance, the Mus. Doc. degree of such a University as London) are really impracticable because they involve too long a period of study for any one but a research scholar.

But this is only true of higher university degrees in music, where the tests are purely theoretical, without any reference to practical matters. In the case of the diploma examinations of the leading colleges and academies it can safely be said that they are well worth studying for; they represent a tangible qualification that not only serves as a guarantee of the efficiency and musical ability of the person who holds them, but the work and discipline involved in a course of study for these higher examinations acts as an unrivalled stimulant to the candidate.

The Age of Entrance.

There is no reason to suppose that examinations exist only for the young music student. In so far as they are a test of ability and a guide to the

ratio of progress they should be used by music students of all ages.

It is a great mistake to regard examinations solely in the light of a terrible ordeal: primarily, they exist for the purpose mentioned, and they should be used to this end. Naturally, as the adult student has usually less time at his disposal for practice, it will be necessary to foreshorten, in some ways, the period of preparation. In many ways this is very easy to achieve, for the adult may dispense with many of those aids and incentives to practice which are so necessary in the case of young children studying music, and may save in this way a considerable period of time in study.

Generally, there are two kinds of adult examination candidates (I am using the term "adult" to distinguish the case of a candidate whose age is considerably in advance of the average, for example, about 30–40 years old): (*a*) the efficient musician who desires to acquire an additional qualification in music, or who wants to prove his abilities by obtaining a diploma, and (*b*) the adult who is only studying music at present, that is, not a musician already qualified.

The first type is easy to deal with, having been trained for music. But the second category is not always so easy. As the adult has usually by this time acquired set habits of practice, etc., it is often difficult to persuade him to adopt the disciplinary methods of the examination candidate.

Yet if he wishes to succeed, he will need to adapt himself to those regular habits of study and practice which are so necessary to all candidates.

Adult students need not be discouraged. Their worst difficulties will usually be nervousness and sight-reading, subjects treated in detail in subsequent chapters of the present work.

As an instance of what perseverance can effect, the *Musical Standard* some years ago gave particulars of a rural postman who, although commencing the study of violin at the rather mature (for a string player) age of twenty-five, succeeded within a few years in passing the Fellowship and Licentiate diploma of two colleges of music. This case, not by any means isolated, shows what can be achieved by dint of concentrated effort.

MUSICAL COLLEGES AND INSTITUTIONS

THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC,
York Gate, Marylebone Road, London, N.W.1.

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC,
Prince Consort Road, S. Kensington, London.

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF ORGANISTS,
Kensington Gore, London, S.W.

THE GUILDHALL SCHOOL OF MUSIC,
Victoria Embankment, London, E.C.4.

THE TRINITY COLLEGE OF MUSIC,
Mandeville Place, Manchester Square,
London, W.1.

THE LONDON COLLEGE OF MUSIC, LTD.,
Gt. Marlborough Street, London, W.1.

THE COLLEGE OF VIOLINISTS, LTD.,
Central Buildings, Westminster, London, S.W.1

THE ROYAL MANCHESTER COLLEGE OF MUSIC,
Manchester.

THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC,
Glasgow.

CHAPTER II

PREPARING TO STUDY FOR EXAMINATIONS

IT will be perfectly obvious, even to the most inexperienced candidate, that the period of preparation before an examination is the one determining factor in his ultimate tests.

Precisely what period ought to be budgeted for in preparing for the ordeal of an important examination depends in the main on considerations which are far too often the result of individual training to be seriously discussed in the present volume; it should be remembered, however, that it is better to allow too long a period of preparation than too short.

System of Practice.

A system of practice will result in much quicker and surer progress than is the case where the student indulges in sporadic efforts. Especially where examinations for diplomas are concerned, it is preferable to adhere strictly to a pre-organized plan of study.

It is necessary to have a schedule of the time to be allotted to the study of the various requirements in the curriculum; and it is best to divide the period of time at the student's disposal into sections, and allocate at least half an hour per day to each. This applies, of course, only to the

private student. Those in schools and colleges are bound to adhere to the curriculum.

The time to be allotted to practice varies. Most examinations, such as the L.R.A.M., A.R.C.M., F.R.C.O., call for an admixture of theoretical and practical subjects. The course of study in the practical subject and the necessary reading in the theoretical branch will require to be drafted out, having in view the considerations of time available and individual idiosyncrasies.

Time was when players practised considerable periods on end without a stop. One hears of musicians who practised as much as fifteen hours a day. That such practice is positively harmful is the general opinion of music teachers nowadays. Shorter hours are the general rule, but greater concentration.

The Art of Practising.

The cardinal virtue of practice is that it is an admirable means of self-discipline. It teaches us to realize our limitations and shows our shortcomings and failings in a manner that we are not likely to forget easily.

It is as well to remember that practising and playing are not the same thing. Practising indeed is a form of building, of making, of creating: playing is the finished product.

That practice is irksome will be admitted by most teachers and students; yet it is an absolutely

necessary qualification to progress. Most young students would scarcely be human if they did not occasionally rebel against the drudgery of practice. Yet it is precisely this exertion of will power and the effort required in conquering the inherent inclination to follow the line of least resistance that makes practice as much a valuable training of the mind as of the fingers.

Revision is, of course, an essential part of the practice: without revision practice ceases to possess its importance.

Practice does not consist merely in repetition: it is something more, a combination of logical analysis and concentration, together with an auto-suggestive determination to improve at all costs. Difficulties must be analysed, and the stumbling block isolated and removed. It is far more useful to select the most difficult and intractable passages for practice, than to remain content to repeat aimlessly the whole movement.

Thoughtless repetition often passes for practice, but the intelligent student will do well to be on his guard against this form of self-delusion. If repetition is persisted in for too long a period, it becomes automatic and correspondingly valueless as a means of training.

Regularity the Watchword.

Practice must be regular; haphazard or irregular periods of practice lead nowhere, and the only

satisfactory way of assuring a constant ratio of progress is by adhering consistently to a given period of practice. Make your practice hours as fixed as your meal-times and you will soon fall into the habit of regular practice.

Fatigue is nature's warning signal that the practice is beginning to tell on the nervous system. At the first signs of real physical fatigue (not merely discomfort, note!) the student should relax his efforts and so enable the muscles involved to recuperate.

It is very necessary to see that practice is not overdone. You will not go far unless you realize that the matter of health is one of primary importance. Do not fatigue yourself, and make a point of taking exercise every day. Cultivate the habit of a daily walk, preferably in the country; if you are studying the history of music, you can combine your "morning constitutional" with a self-questionnaire of your previous knowledge in the subject.

The ability to practise is also determined to some extent by considerations of temperament. There are some students who seem congenitally incapable of secluding themselves in the study, and devoting long hours to serious practice. Others, again, find it difficult to tear themselves away from their instrument when once they have become absorbed in the practice of the day.

Those to whom practice is a bore are clearly

in need of intellectual stimulus in their work: they will require to cultivate their latent powers of concentration. No one is without the ability to concentrate: it is present in every one, but often it is never given a chance to be trained.

It is patent that the mind must be brought to bear on the problems that crop up during practising: this means that mind wandering must be banished. Do not let your mind become distracted by extraneous thoughts, but keep your intelligence fixed on the matter under consideration. Think how you intend to play every note before you actually play it: leave nothing to guess-work, but see that your fingers and muscles are co-ordinated under control.

Certain technical difficulties to be met with in all types of music call for specialized treatment. Thus, in pianoforte playing, octaves and staccato demand extra practice, and in drafting the schedule of practice, allowance should be made for these special difficulties. The encouragement to be derived from the contemplation of successful practice is enormous, and is perhaps even more valuable than the actual practice itself. The realization that we can play a piece of music to-day, after weeks of practice, that would have been impossible before, is a tremendous incentive to continue in the search for technical perfection.

There must be a definite routine, from which the intending candidate should never depart unless

absolutely compelled to do so. Nor should practice be regarded as a burden, for the mind in such a case will gradually begin to occupy itself with other matters, in order to relieve the tedium.

Accuracy an Important Consideration.

Practice is quite meaningless unless it is carried out with the intention of securing accuracy throughout: accuracy of note and time values, accuracy of phrasing and accuracy of interpretation. To this end practice should always be intelligent: the student should assume the *rôle* of critic at his own performance, determined to check any departure from the normal standard of accuracy.

Speed of progress, while not essential, is often a consideration in studying for examinations, where the student is, in a manner of speaking, "working against time." If the particular examination in view is really too near at hand to permit of its being encompassed, without falling into slipshod methods and bad habits through the inability to spend time on their correction, then it is better to postpone the examination.

Bad habits are easily acquired, and it should be part of the student's daily routine to scrutinize his finished work with meticulous care, and discover any traces of imperfection, any awkward slips of technique, or any flaws of interpretation which mar the artistic and logical continuity of the work.

Sometimes these bad habits are due to mere

inexcusable carelessness, and sometimes they are attributable to lack of supervision on the teacher's part. It often happens that a teacher will allow a pupil to march on from lesson to lesson at a pace that is really too quick to yield good and lasting results. This is rather a matter for the teacher than the student, but as this book will doubtless be read by both, it is deemed advisable to call attention to the fact that practice should be so planned as to be well within the student's physical and mental capacity.

Slow Practice : Its Uses and Abuses.

Those teachers who have made a deep study of slow practice, that is to say, the practising of works at a much slower *tempo* than usual, assure us that the benefits that accrue from this procedure are enormous.

The brain must be allowed its own pace at which to assist the purely muscular activity, and it is in slow practice that the mind can afford the most valuable assistance.

This slow practice has the inestimable benefits of enabling the player to take stock of his deficiencies: he is able to take time to think, with the result that he is often able to do in an instant, after having carefully studied his shortcomings, what in the case of another, who does not trouble to reflect so conscientiously during his practising, would probably take hours, or even days, to master.

In some cases slow practice will be out of the question, owing to the small margin of time left at the student's disposal for the purpose of getting up examination requirements. This is often the case in school and certificate examinations, of the type of the Associated Board, especially where the candidates are young pupils, either taught at school, or whose school duties absorb so much of their time as to leave little opportunity for the music teacher. This is one of the unfortunate drawbacks of the examination system, that it encourages "cramming" and hurried preparation; yet the teacher should strive to ameliorate, as far as possible, these pernicious effects by means of a scientifically planned system of practice.

Emotion and Interpretation.

As marks are awarded and deducted on a generous scale for style and interpretation, it behoves the student to take particular pains with the interpretative side of his practice. The old notion that interpretation was a species of maudlin sentiment thrown in the music, at the pleasure of the performer, with little regard to logic or principle, is now thoroughly exploded.

That there are laws of musical interpretation which are as susceptible to definition as, for example, the laws of psychology, has been demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt. Even a cursory glance at such a volume as Mr. Tobias Matthay's

revealing work entitled *Musical Interpretation* will be sufficient to convince the impartial observer that a performance suffers nothing from having its interpretative side carefully prepared and regulated beforehand.

Such matters as *tempo*, rhythm, dynamic variants, *ritardandi* and *accelerandi*, as well as the phraseology of the work to be performed, are all matters that can be carefully regulated. In modern examinations, where the spirit, rather than the letter, of the performance is looked at, particular attention should be paid to rational interpretation.

An important factor for the pianist, which is to some extent a matter of interpretation, is the acquisition of a beautiful touch. I cannot do better than quote the *ipsissima verba* of an eminent soloist, while on the subject of piano touch. "Touch," observes M. Ossip Gabrilowitch, the famous Russian virtuoso, "is that distinguishing feature which makes one player's music sound different from that of another: it is touch that dominates the player's means of producing dynamic shading or tone quality. I know that many authorities contend that the quality of tone depends upon the instruments rather than the performer, yet I am reasonably confident that if I were to hear a number of pianists play in succession upon the same instrument behind a screen, and one of these performers were my

friend Harold Bauer, I could at once identify his playing by his peculiarly individual touch. In fact, the trained ear can identify different individual characteristics with almost the same accuracy with which we identify voices." Touch is quite as much a matter of careful training as a brilliant technique, and pianoforte students should not overlook it.

The Use of the Metronome.

The question of *tempo* is all-important for the candidate. Whether the test piece is an *étude*, or a sonata, it is equally desirable to have a sound idea as to the precise speed at which a work ought properly to be taken.

No doubt the choice of a *tempo* is occasionally a matter which falls to the discretion of the player; yet generally the *tempi* of such standard works as are most likely to be chosen as examination tests for candidates are fairly well established by tradition and usage.

In the playing of studies and scales the metronome is invaluable, and all students should take care to practise these with the instrument regularly ticking off the measures.

But in solo pieces, especially those in which the element of *tempo rubato* dominates, it is better to use the metronome at the beginning merely as a guide, and later to discard it. The metronome is an invaluable instrument if it is used with

caution. The careful use of this piece of mechanism will fortify the candidate to whom general indications such as *allegro*, *andante* and *moderato* convey nothing satisfactory.

No two composers hold exactly the same views as to the precise value of these generic indications of *tempo*: they are far too vague to be anything more than a mere indication, the exact determination of which is left to the discretion of the performer. It has been pointed out by a musicologist writing in the early nineteenth century that the extreme divergence between the renditions of similar *tempo* indications in the works of various composers, left the accurate predetermination of a given *tempo*, far too often, a matter of whim or caprice. He cites the parallel cases of Cherubini, who played an *allegro* movement at a pace equivalent to M.M. ♩ = 50, while Clementi played the same piece at the rate of ♩ = 126. A glaring instance occurs in the collected works of J. B. Cramer, where *moderato* is sometimes equal to ♩ = 63 and sometimes ♩ = 116. The disparity is enormous, and indicates the relativity of the old Italian indications, which are not sufficiently definite for modern examination purposes. Gretry used to remark: "I am so convinced of the insufficiency of ordinary Italian indication that I believe that a composition written in Amsterdam, marked *allegro*, would be played *andante* in Marseilles."

Hence the universal success with which the invention of the metronome has met. The metronome of Johann Nepomuk Maelzel is the instrument in general use to-day, and since its discovery in 1815, it has never been superseded. When it was first introduced, it received a unanimous welcome from musicians of eminence such as Cherubini, Mehul, Kreutzer and Kalkbrenner, and when the instrument was first exhibited in England in 1816, it was warmly received by all the leading musicians of the day, who publicly declared their intention to use in future only metronome indications instead of the old Italian marks. Among the composers who endorsed this were Bishop, Cramer, Clementi, Hummel, Moscheles, Spohr, Beethoven and Salieri.

Authenticity of Metronome Markings.

So that there is every reason to regard metronomic indications since 1816 as being authentic, although there have been notorious instances of composers who use misleading metronome marks. Schumann, for instance, was known to use a machine that was out of order, and, in the sequel, his own registration is invariably incorrect, and of no value to the examination candidate.

In the absence of a metronome, the watch or clock is quite a reliable substitute. As a general rule, it can be stated that the indication ♩ = 150 is approximately equivalent to two crochets to

each tick of the clock or watch. The other divisions can be easily found by dividing or multiplying this unit as the case may be.

It is important to remember, however, that metronome marks are not rigid fixtures never to be departed from. Like the Italian expressions, they are only guides, and a wise student will take care that he does not bind himself to the ticking of a metronome, especially in slow movements.

The Gramophone as an Aid.

The gramophone, to say nothing of the radio and player-piano, is an excellent mechanical aid to the candidate. As practically all the current test pieces are recorded, often in several alternative versions, by great soloists, it is patent that there is here a splendid stimulus for the keen student.

Especially in the matter of interpretation is the gramophone invaluable for all examination candidates, vocalists and instrumentalists alike. Those who are reading for theoretical examinations, such as history and orchestration, will find the gramophone a priceless asset.

The gramophone is extremely appropriate to examinations in schools, where music is part of the normal curriculum, and in training colleges for teachers, as well as in ordinary primary and secondary schools.

It is an excellent means of stimulating interest in musical history. Palestrina, Byrd, Purcell and

Gluck, composers who are far too often mere names in the normal life of a music student, become living actualities when their representative works can be heard in the classroom or in the studio through the medium of the gramophone.

Those studying for diplomas in conducting will find that the various recordings of orchestral masterpieces constitute an invaluable course for becoming acquainted with the typical orchestral masters.

How to Study the Theoretical Subjects.

Theoretical subjects suffer largely from the oft-expressed, yet fallacious, dictum that "theoretical subjects ought to be learnt theoretically." It is a mistake to imagine, as so many students do, that harmony and counterpoint are merely dry-as-dust examples of pedantry. On the contrary, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the study of the theoretical side of music, such as harmony, counterpoint, canon and fugue, etc., is not a lifeless pursuit, but work of a highly absorbing kind.

These subjects are not to be treated as arithmetical problems, but as matters of aesthetics. They are all part of the current vocabulary of the composer, and should be regarded as a means of training the creative mind to express itself in musical composition rather than as a dull pursuit, only to he tackled because examiners require

students to know "harmony so far as the dominant seventh and its inversions."

We live in an age that pays greater respect to actual creation than theory; and it is of far greater importance to realize why a composer writes as he does, than merely to accept textbook rules as gospel truth. If the study of these theoretical subjects is to be at all valuable, the student will do well to occupy himself with an earnest and original research into the most representative works of the great masters: let him take great works and analyse them, not in the spirit of a surgeon dissecting a carcass, but as an explorer striking new territories.

History should not be neglected, because by its light we are enabled to solve many mysteries which would he otherwise impenetrable.

CHAPTER III

THE PRACTICAL EXAMINATION

It may seem a trite point, but nevertheless I wish to emphasize the necessity for being thoroughly *au fait* with the requirements of the examining bodies as set forth in the *current* syllabus.

It would surprise the reader to know how many candidates actually go into the examination room without ever having so much as glanced through the syllabus beforehand.

The candidate should always familiarize himself with the requirements, otherwise he is in danger of being caught unprepared in some vital detail. It is also important to read the *current* syllabus as requirements frequently change from year to year.

Selecting the Test Pieces.

If candidates could only inquire into the reasons that compel the examiner to deduct marks, they would find that considerable numbers of lost marks are attributable to an inappropriate choice of test pieces. This is not always the fault of the candidate himself. In many cases the teacher is to blame, because it is he who chooses the test pieces on behalf of the student. The matter is so important, however, as to justify special consideration.

As a general rule, in most examinations to-day, there is almost an embarrassment of test pieces from which to make a choice. In making the final decision, regard must be had to several determining factors. It is not enough to feel that you like a certain piece and select it as a test merely because of that. The suggested piece should be examined in detail. Does it contain any awkward passages that are practically bound to spell disaster? Is it very slow, and will it only sound well on an extremely good piano? (A good deal of the music of Debussy comes within this description.) If it demands an extremely well-conditioned instrument in order to do it justice, then it had better be shelved, and another piece substituted, for the candidate is not always certain to secure a good instrument in the examination room, especially at local centres.

A candidate should not attempt music that is beyond his limitations, either technical or interpretative. An examiner does not "make allowances" for differences of mental and technical development amongst candidates. The candidate is expected to select test pieces that are within his abilities, and this is a matter which should be dealt with at the very outset.

Working Up to "Concert Pitch."

Test pieces are, of course, the chief means whereby the examiner assesses the general

musical ability of the candidate. The test piece reflects all the talents of the candidate as well as all his deficiencies. It is in the test piece that the examiner probes the weaknesses, and is able to detect flaws which will adversely affect, not only the specific solo, but the general style of the student.

It is most essential to insist that test pieces do not suffer from excess of interpretation. Far better to play everything rather prosaically, yet perfectly in *tempo*, and with accurate technique, than to concentrate exclusively on the interpretative side. The examiner usually looks more for a satisfactory technical ability than for a concert artist's mature imagination.

The candidate ought to see that his playing is clean and legitimate. Particular attention must be paid to the *manner* of performance; for the examiner is quite as interested in the methods as in the result.

But test pieces are not the be-all and end-all of musical examinations. The set studies constitute a most important part of the tests. The study or *étude* is usually confined to a particular technical difficulty, from the more or less simple studies of Czerny, to the involved and elaborate concert *études* of Liszt and Chopin. (I am speaking here of the pianoforte, but the same principle applies with equal force to string instruments, as for instance in the case of the violinist: his easier

studies are those of Kayser and Mazas, while his concert studies are the "24 Caprices" of Paganini.) Every day of the period of preparatory practice should see at least an hour devoted to the study of one or more of the examination studies. In practising studies, *tempo* is most important. Slow practice of technical exercises scarcely improves the defects to any appreciable extent.

Ear Tests and Aural Training.

One of the leading tests demanded under modern examination conditions is the aural test. It is increasingly obvious that the aural test is coming to mean more every year in the musical examination, and the candidate who wishes to make certain of success will do well to cultivate a perfect ear.

The usual test is calculated to determine the candidate's receptivity to given harmonic passages, but at the same time, the student should not lose sight of the fact that rhythmic tests, connected with *tempo* and note values, are becoming more common at examinations.

More than any other subject in the curriculum is the ear-test dependent on careful training. For at least six months prior to the examination, the candidate should be incessantly drilled in the type of test which is likely to occur. Cadences should be so learnt as to be immediately recognizable, no matter in what form they may be presented. The

candidate should possess an extremely sound ear for tonality, so as to be able immediately to detect any key in which a particular test is played.

There is a special diploma in aural culture (pre-eminently suitable as a qualification for music masters in schools) awarded by the Royal College of Music. Quite apart from diploma examinations, attention is being paid to the importance of aural tests in examinations by bodies, such as the General Schools and Matriculation Examination (London University), not exclusively concerned with music. It is gradually being realized that the ultimate test of musicianship lies, not so much in the paper work tests or purely theoretical subjects, as in these aural tests. The usual types of test in the non-diploma examinations are: (1) singing a simple tune at sight; (2) writing from dictation a four or eight-bar phrase; (3) writing down in musical notation certain rhythms tapped, or played, by the Examiner; (4) naming the keys through which a given modulatory passage passes.

The singing test is fairly easy. Naturally, the examiner does not expect a good or pleasing voice. All that he requires is some evidence of a sense of pitch and rhythm. The compass of the tune is usually within an octave range, and is generally diatonic.

The cadences are absolutely essential and they usually present the greatest obstacles to candidates.

It is necessary to stress the importance of the cadence as a sort of musical punctuation mark, like a comma or full-stop. Also the three primary chords must be well known in all the various inversions.

It is not necessary to make an elaborate study of harmony in order to acquire the necessary skill in ear tests. All that is essential is to hear repeatedly the various kinds of cadence, such as Perfect, Plagal, Imperfect, and Interrupted, played in various keys and with different rhythmic values. The ear should also be trained to recognize intervals without hesitation: this portion of the ear-training is quite as important as the cadences, yet many candidates seem to be incapable of naming intervals correctly.

The Danger of Overwork.

One of the worst evils of the examination system, and one which more than all the others calls for special mention, is the danger of overworking. There is always a tendency in many pupils to over-exaggerate the importance of the occasion and the magnitude of the task before them. Such candidates pre-occupy themselves to such an extent with the examination requirements, that eventually mind and muscles alike become tired and refuse to function normally. This is a bad sign, indicating that too much time is being used for practising the same type of work. A little

variety will make all the difference between a jaded mind, and one that is alert and ready for everything that comes before it.

The time spent in preparation for an examination is always something of a formidable ordeal, for usually, the position is such that time is all-important. Not being able to "take things easily," the candidate is inclined to over-tax his powers of endurance by too much preparation, often more pernicious in its far-reaching effects than too little.

The danger lies in the fact that spontaneity of interpretation, elasticity of technique and the healthy vigour of the playing tend to vanish, leaving a player whose faculties are befogged, and whose nervous system has lost its vitality.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the candidate must retain a high standard of physical stamina, and should be in perfect health: in the absence of these physical conditions the pressure of training may well lead to severe illness and nervous prostration.

CHAPTER IV

THE THEORETICAL EXAMINATION

QUITE apart from the purely theoretical examinations such as Mus.Bac., L.R.A.M. (Theory) and L.Mus.T.C.L., etc., all practical examinations nowadays also require certain elementary theoretical subjects, generally the rudiments or grammar of music, and an elementary knowledge of harmony up to the dominant seventh.

To many candidates the theoretical portion of the test constitutes the *bête noire* of the whole examination. This is largely due to the irrational method of preparing for the test that is commonly employed. Far too many students divorce the theoretical from the practical side of music, with the result that they are on *terra incognita* when they come to be examined in such subjects as analysis, harmony, counterpoint, etc.

It should never be forgotten that what is colloquially referred to as "theory" is really the scientific basis of the art of composition—composition reduced, in a manner of speaking, to rule. Students are asked to learn this theoretical part, not because they will be required to compose, but because as players, singers, or teachers they will be called on to interpret and teach the works of the great masters. Without an intimate

knowledge of the subliminal processes of composition, they will not be in a position to teach or play with anything approaching authority. In the absence of a knowledge of form, for instance, any performance tends to become meaningless, degenerating into parrot-like repetition. Hence the necessity of familiarizing one's self with all those branches of music comprehended within the convenient description "theoretical."

"Theory" ought to be studied hand in hand with the more practical matters. Every new or strange scale, any unusual harmonic progression, should be studied and "looked up." In this way "theory" ceases to be a dry-as-dust cerebral study, and becomes something of living and vital interest.

Again, in the matter of continental expression marks, it is almost inconceivable how many players and singers continue to struggle on, without knowing accurately the meaning of the various indications with which they meet in the printed copy. Yet it is the easiest thing in the world to look up all strange terms in the dictionary, and to commit the definitions to memory.

Form, too, ought to be approached from this practical angle. Most examining bodies require candidates for diplomas to be able to analyse their test pieces. This work should be done while studying the test preparatory to the examination: the analysis should not be made in a cold-blooded,

purely bookish way, but should be the result of actual contact with the music; for an analysis made when playing, under musical conditions, is of far greater value than a mere splitting up, on paper, of the music into its component parts.

As theoretical examinations are conducted practically throughout by means of papers, it is advisable to put in a good deal of practice in answering representative questions and correcting the answers, carefully noting any mistakes made. In such subjects as history of music and analysis this course is very necessary. Specimen papers, actually set at past examinations, are easily obtainable from the various colleges and institutions.

It would be a good thing if the worked solutions of candidates at theory examinations were to be returned: but at present it is not the custom for examiners to return marked papers, with one exception—the Incorporated London Academy of Music—an institution which regularly sends back all papers, with examiners' corrections, to candidates. This is a splendid example which should be copied by all other bodies.

In written examinations, great attention should be paid to the diction and style of writing. It is important to marshal your facts in logical fashion, and, wherever possible, reference should be made to actual musical examples. Nothing impresses an examiner so much as the ability on the part of a

candidate to quote from actual musical scores, as this argues familiarity with the recognized classics.

The style should be terse and expressive. Write straight to the point, and see that your grammar is as good and as free from errors as if the essay were set at an examination in English.

The Art of Teaching.

It is now universally recognized that the art of teaching is a specific subject to be studied separately, and the various examining institutions have not been backward in preparing examinations suited to the testing of candidates contemplating entering the profession in the capacity of teachers.

Both the Royal Academy and the Royal College distinguish between the candidate who sits the examination as a "performer," and his fellow-student who holds himself out as a teacher, and the two types have totally distinct examinations and conditions: even the test pieces are different in each case. Candidates are required to explain, as to a pupil, the chief facts concerning the mechanism and technique of their instrument, and to exhibit a good gift for explicit teaching. Interpretation is also a strong point, and all candidates must show an ability to answer any question concerning the training of pupils, methods of practice, and the choice of music for various stages of a pupil's development.

In the Trinity College of Music diploma

examinations a separate paper is set, of which the following is an indication of the chief requirements.

ART OF TEACHING PAPER

Notation and Time. How to teach notation and the perception of rhythm. How to explain the relative duration of sounds, the counting of time, beat subdivisions, time signatures, proper use of rests, irregular note groups.

Tune. How to train the ear to recognize the relation of single sounds to a given tonic, various intervals, chords, cadences. How to train the ear to distinguish between concords and discords. How to teach the proper notation of diatonic and chromatic scales. How to explain enharmonic changes, tonality, and modulations.

Technique. A knowledge of recognized methods of technique, according to the special subject entered for (Piano, Organ, Violin, Singing, etc.) Sight-reading.

Interpretation. How to explain (1) the principles of phrasing, (2) the use of *staccato, crescendo, diminuendo, tempo rubato, portamento,* (3) different methods of expression peculiar to (*a*) the piano, (*b*) the organ, (*c*) string and wind instruments, (*d*) the voice. The elements of formal design in musical composition, including the use of both regular and irregular musical sentences.

Because the Art of Teaching papers are so

practical, it behoves candidates to have at their finger-tips all the various types of difficulties with which the average pupil is likely to meet in his work.

The candidate for the Teaching Diploma of either the L.R.A.M. or A.R.C.M., and for such examinations as the Trinity College of Music ("Art of Teaching" paper) should have a well-defined plan of all the various methods, tutors, studies, etc., extant, and their best points.

The pianoforte candidate, for instance, must have a general acquaintance with the classical studies of such composers as Moscheles, Czerny, Cramer, etc., who specialized in the writing of studies for specific technical purposes. This general acquaintance connotes something more than knowing merely the *opus* numbers and titles. The candidate must have a stock of at least a hundred classical studies from which he can draw, to illustrate some such technical difficulty as shakes, skips, contrapuntal treatment, *legato* and *staccato* octave passages, thirds and sixths and *arpeggios*. It is manifestly impossible to be *au fait* with all the studies written for the instrument, but the candidate should at least possess a representative selection, such as is contained in Franklin Taylor's collected edition, published by Novello & Co.

The tests for the teacher are never simple. They call for ingenuity and presence of mind, rather than for any profound musical learning. They are

calculated to discover the ability of the candidate as teacher rather than as mere technician.

The Bachelor of Music Examination.

The university degree of Mus.Bac. (leading eventually to Mus.Doc) is perhaps the most eagerly coveted academic distinction that can be obtained in the musical profession. The standard demanded is very high, and the cost is also much higher than that of the ordinary college diploma.

There are two systems of obtaining the Mus.Bac. degree. The first is by residence in some particular university, attending the lectures, etc., and thus becoming an undergraduate. The other is by studying privately outside the university and sitting the examinations in the capacity of an "external" candidate. The second method is not available in every one of our universities: for instance, in Manchester, Edinburgh and Birmingham Universities, external candidates are not permitted to enter under any circumstances. Only students in actual residence at the university are allowed to enter. The term "actual residence" does not necessarily imply living within the university building or even in the same town, it merely refers to attendance at classes and lectures, and the working of compulsory prescribed exercises.

Other institutions, such as the Universities of London and Durham, admit external candidates without distinction. Perhaps the most popular

university for external music students is Durham, and as the standard is high, the degree is well worth the hard work entailed.

All universities set a Matriculation or Preliminary Examination intended to test the candidate's general education. All who contemplate studying for Mus.Bac. should first dispose of the Matriculation Examination. Usually this consists of fairly elementary papers in English, History, French (or other foreign language) and Elementary Mathematics.

After this preliminary examination has been negotiated, the candidate is next faced with the Intermediate Examination followed eventually by the Final, on the results of which the university awards its degree. The Intermediate usually consists of the following subjects: History of Music, Form, Harmony, and Counterpoint. Either during the interval between Intermediate and Final examinations, or at the Final itself, the candidate is also required to submit an "exercise," i.e. an original composition of fairly large dimensions, usually taking the form of a choral work with orchestral accompaniment. The Final examination is very difficult and requires a solid training, preferably at the hands of a teacher who is himself a graduate. As all the various universities differ in their regulations, it is advisable to procure a copy of the current calendar or year book before setting to work to prepare for the examinations.

The *viva voce* examination is also a leading feature of most of the higher theoretical examinations. All candidates should be prepared to answer questions concerning the limitations, *timbre*, capabilities, etc., of various instruments and voices, and to answer any questions dealing with technical points involved in harmony, form, and counterpoint. They should possess a working knowledge of the great masterpieces of the classical composers, and, wherever possible, should be able to lend point to this knowledge by displayiug a practical acquaintance with the scores. To this end it is desirable to do as much reading through scores as possible—operatic scores like *Fidelio* (Beethoven), the Wagner and Verdi operas, *Carmen* (Bizet), etc., as well as prominent examples of the best chamber music.

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CHAPTER V

THE PIANO CANDIDATE

By far the great majority of music students preparing for examinations are mainly concerned with the pianoforte as their principal subject. Perhaps because the number of entrants is larger, the standard required of candidates for a pass-mark is usually higher in the case of piano students.

The first essential of a piano student is that he should possess a sound and reliable technique; for the modern examiner will tolerate nothing slipshod. Everything must be brilliant and free from flaws in execution.

Certain aspects of technique, such as octave-playing, left-hand passage work, wrist technique, etc., demand the special attention of the student.

Octave passages in particular call for special treatment. The physical difficulties encountered in octave passages are sufficient to cause most students a good deal of trouble. If the candidate has never disciplined himself to octave work, then he ought to see that he gets plenty of practice before the examination, for octave-playing is usually one of the vulnerable points in his armour.

The left hand, as every piano-student and teacher knows, is usually a most distressing feature. The cause is to be sought for in the undue prominence which the right hand receives at the

expense of the left. The best way to balance this shortcoming is to allocate special studies in which the left hand usurps the *rôle* usually sustained by the right hand. Good examples are: Scriabine's "Prelude and Nocturne," Opus 9, and Blumenfield's "Étude for Left Hand," Opus 36. Also Max Reger's "Studies for Left Hand"; Bela Bartok, "Four Pieces," (No. 1); Swinstead, "Six Studies for Left Hand."

Scale Practice in Examinations.

Although, in the performer's diploma of the L.R.A.M. and A.R.C.M., scale-playing does not occupy a prominent position, there is no doubt that examiners still repose a great deal of faith in the candidate's ability to play scales and arpeggios with facility.

No part of the candidate's practice is usually so excruciating a torment as scale-playing. Most students look upon scale-playing as a necessary evil, and are only too glad to escape the irksome grind and hurry away on to the more pleasant occupation of preparing the test pieces.

This attitude is quite indefensible. Scale-practice which aims at acquiring mere velocity and agility is, of course, practically worthless. If the hours devoted to this practice are to produce any results of enduring benefit to the student, they must be undertaken with just as much concentration as the most interesting study or piece.

Scales provide the basis of technique, expression and tone production. Their importance cannot possibly be over-estimated. In instrumental music especially, scales and arpeggios form the staple basis of most of the "passage work" that abounds in classical and modern music. A perfect command of this technique is therefore a matter of supreme importance to the examination candidate.

Rhythmic playing of scales and arpeggios is essential to success. The aimless scampering up and down the keyboard, indulged in by so many pupils in the name of scales and arpeggios, is not only quite useless as a preparation for examination requirements, but is positively pernicious in its effects.

The Usual Requirements.

The candidate should be in a position to play all the scales more or less subconsciously. There should be no effort to recall the exact sequence of notes, and the fingering should be invariable. Nothing is so highly suspicious to the examiner as a succession of "false starts."

The speed is also important: it is advisable to practise scales with the metronome and adhere strictly to a fairly quick *tempo*. All scales and arpeggios should be practised with legato and staccato touch. For most examinations it is immaterial whether the candidate uses wrist or finger staccato.

Regularity and evenness are the important factors in all scale-playing. There is scarcely any point in preparing scales unless they are played convincingly, in perfect rhythm, and without any trace of effort or disjointedness. The examiner wants to hear scale-playing that is brilliant, rapid, and without unpleasant jerks.

It is generally best to practise scales first thing in the morning when the mind and muscles are in their most receptive and vigorous condition. Hans von Bülow, one of the most systematic of virtuosos, used to allocate two hours before breakfast to the serious study of scales and arpeggios.

The Necessity for Scale Practice.

Experience shows that many candidates find the playing of scales in contrary motion a stumbling block at examinations. Here the difficulty is mainly mental, and often attributable to neglect in early tuition. All teachers should, from the first, accustom pupils to playing scales in contrary motion. The use of this type of scale is invaluable because it tends to inspire greater confidence in the pupil, a wider compass of key board, and also prevents the pupil from allowing his left hand to wander aimlessly behind the right hand.

Mere repetition of tetrachords does not constitute scale practice. The student should be able to explain the way in which the scale is built up,

and should know the various technical points concerning the varieties of minor scales.

Having regard to the fact that so many modern composers habitually write in ancient modes, as well as in the more up-to-date whole-tone scale, it seems difficult to understand why scale practice is restricted to diatonic systems. Even if examiners are not required to ask candidates to play these scale forms, there is no reason why candidates should not know them. Their value in sight-reading tests of modern works is incalculable.

The Art of Pedalling.[1]

Pedalling is one of the most individual points in piano technique. More than anything else, it reveals alike one's artistry and training. I do not suppose that any two pianists pedal in precisely the same manner, a fact which indicates that pedalling has not as yet been reduced to a system of workable rules such as obtains in fingering for instance. Furthermore, many external considerations, such as the make of the piano, its age, the acoustical properties of the hall, etc., combine in consequence to render pedalling a matter which cannot be rigidly predetermined.

But as many composers take especial care to see that their pedalling is artistic and free from ambiguity, wherever the pedalling is indicated, it

[1] Those candidates who read German should study the following textbooks: L. Köhler "Der Klavierpedalzug" and Hans Schmitt "Das Klavierpedal."

should be rigorously followed, unless there is some sound reason for adopting a contrary practice.

No doubt composers occasionally stray in their notions of what constitutes good pedalling, and in such a case the student must use his discretion. But, generally, he can act safely on the printed instructions.

Basically the use of the pedals is to sustain harmonies or notes that would otherwise become lost. The ability to introduce the sustaining pedal at the right moment is, therefore, largely assisted by an adequate knowledge of harmony in its practical application to pianistic technique.

In the absence of a good working knowledge of harmony, it is not wise to leave the pedalling to chance, nor to rely on an occasional glimpse at the indications contained at the foot of the left-hand stave. Pedalling should become a habit; and to this end it will amply repay the extra time expended if the student makes a point of practising daily a number of special pedal exercises, such as those contained in the volume of Rafael Jossefy.

The pedalling technique must be quite as consistent and methodical as the fingering for the same passage.

Logic in Pedalling.

The sustaining pedal is not merely to be depressed when it occurs to the player to do so. Its introduction should be planned with studious care.

Nothing is more displeasing to the examiner than a candidate who blurs his phrases by a persistent abuse of the "loud" pedal.

The trouble with the loud pedal is that far too many candidates are inclined to maltreat it. This malpractice is so common that a sort of convention has sprung up with regard to certain composers, in which the pedal is never to be depressed at all. A case in point is the piano works of J. S. Bach. Here, one habitually hears the injunction: "Don't pedal at all in Bach."

Historically, this advice is no doubt justified, on the ground that in Bach's time the pedal had not then been invented, and therefore the composer of the "Forty-eight" could not have contemplated the introduction of a sustaining device in any of his works for the keyboard instrument. Yet most soloists are agreed that Bach is the better for a little discreet pedalling. What is to be guarded against is overdoing it.

In works of all types the examiner looks for a judicious use of *both* pedals. While it is doubtless better to use no pedal at all than to spoil effects by illogical pedalling, no student ought to sit for any of the higher examinations until he has acquired a sound knowledge of the pedal and its uses.

Cultivating a Fine Touch.

The importance of an even and musical touch is obvious, especially in the diploma examinations.

In the examinations for L.R.A.M. and A.R.C.M. (Teacher's diplomas) candidates are required to answer questions asked *viva voce* relating to touch; it is therefore essential for the candidate to possess more than a rudimentary knowledge of this important and somewhat neglected subject.

Touch is not a result of elusive inspiration: nor is it either an hereditary gift; it is simply a matter of technical proficiency acquired in the ordinary way. Such a book as Tobias Matthay's *First Principles of Pianoforte Playing* is a tremendous asset to the keen student wishing to make more than a cursory study of this most important branch of piano technique.

It would hardly seem necessary to mention the fact—were it not that experience demonstrates the necessity for pointing out—that it is not much use reading a book on touch and becoming *au fait* with the technical explanations contained therein, unless you transmute them into actual practice. Many candidates can talk at great length about the subject from a theoretical point of view, yet fail hopelessly when they are required to do it. This is a matter calling for careful supervision during the period of preparation for the examination.

Of recent years there has been considerable speculation on the exact physical processes involved in the act of touch. It is common knowledge that the leading text writer on the subject

is Mr. Matthay, whose contributions to a scientific survey of the subject have placed all teachers and students considerably in his debt. Matthay divides touch into three kinds: (1) finger touch, (2) hand touch, and (3) arm-weight touch.

The Dangers of Theorizing.

Admirable as Mr. Matthay's treatment of the subject is, it would be clearly impossible for any single authority to discuss such an important topic without occasionally touching on certain aspects which invite controversial argument. The case of Mr. Matthay and his theories is no exception.

The examination candidate will therefore do well to remember that the examiner may not be one of Matthay's disciples: hence the necessity of being acquainted with the arguments both for and against these theories.

However this may be, there can be no doubt as to the necessity of knowing, for examination purposes, the various types of piano touch.

The old theory that "musical touch" is born in a player and cannot be imparted by training, is now thoroughly discredited. Touch is quite as much a result of constant and assiduous practice as any other technical resource of modern pianism. Hence, while the student is practising for the examination in view, he should be careful to keep a watchful eye on this matter; as without an

artistic touch, an original and arresting interpretation is impossible.

Tempo Rubato : A Warning.

Far more valuable, from the musical point of view, than the mere ability to play a sequence of notes or chords correctly, is the possession of a strong and vital sense of rhythm.

The first step to good rhythmic playing resides in correct time-keeping. The latter, especially in pianists, is often completely absent; all examination candidates should see that they play the set pieces in correct time as otherwise many marks will be lost.

Yet *exact* time-keeping is impossible from anything save a machine. The candidate is expected to have a good idea of accurate time-keeping and to be able to play in *tempi* commonly admitted by those most qualified to judge to be correct.

A proper conception of *tempo* is one of the primary qualifications of a musician. Edvard Grieg, the famous Scandinavian composer, used to remark: "*Tempo* should be in the blood." If it is not there, we may take it for granted that the other intentions of the composer also will be frustrated. One of the greatest faults of the pianist is the desire to play compositions at a much quicker speed than indicated, in order to display his technical abilities. It was against such pupils that Hans von Bülow once sarcastically

inveighed: "I think you have mistaken your piano for a sewing-machine!"

Difficult as the determination of a correct *tempo* may be, this problem of *tempo rubato* is even more difficult. Clearly, as music is a declamatory and a practical form of art, it is neither possible nor desirable to keep the *tempo* fixed at one consistent rate, never to be departed from.

Imperceptible Departure from Normal.

Hence the artistic necessity of departing occasionally from the strict time: it is this almost imperceptible departure from the normal beat which constitutes *tempo rubato.*

Not unnaturally, there has been a tendency to exaggeration which has brought *tempo rubato* into disrepute. *Tempo rubato* is not to be indulged in promiscuously without logic or reason. It is only justified when the sheer eloquence of the music demands a certain lingering, or a certain impetuosity on occasional passages. To an artistic and musicianly mind, the precise place for this slight modification of the *tempo* will be indicated by the very structure of the piece without any other explanation.

The student who does not *feel* the necessity for its introduction had better leave it alone entirely, for nothing sounds more disgraceful than violent disturbances of rhythm by the introduction of a misplaced *tempo rubato.*

Although Chopin and Liszt were the two composer-pianists most responsible for the introduction of *tempo rubato* into modern piano music, it was not exclusively their own discovery. Liszt's own explanation of the species was enlightening: "Look at these trees," he used to remark. "The wind plays in the leaves, stirs up life among them: yet the tree remains the same—that is Chopin's *rubato.*"

Certain composers, particularly Chopin, Schumann, Debussy and Grieg, seem to possess such a special fascination for the student who has become obsessed with the superficial attraction of *tempo rubato,* that a specific caution is necessary when playing the works of these composers.

Tempo rubato is only an infinitesimal departure from the normal. It is instructive to note that its greatest exponent, Chopin, was himself devoted to the metronome and used it habitually. Do not assume that *tempo rubato* is a licence to throw time-keeping to the winds.

The Art of Pianoforte Accompaniment.

The art of the accompanist is not one easily acquired: the popular notion that any pianist who fails to achieve the high standard required of a soloist can easily become the "next best thing"—an accompanist—is rapidly giving way to the more enlightened view that the business of the

accompanist calls for a training as exclusive, and as carefully prepared, as that of the soloist.

The accompanist has long attained the dignity of recognition as a special subject for diploma award in the examinations of both the Royal Academy and Royal College of Music.

The regulations of both these institutions in this branch of pianoforte playing are very similar. The candidate is reqnired to prepare about four accompaniments, consisting usually of one instrumental work and three vocal solos. He is also called upon to undergo a sight-reading test (which usually involves a Recitative and Air) and to transpose at sight a simple accompaniment.

In addition to these tests (two of which are considered in detail in the seventh chapter of this book devoted to "Sight-Reading") the candidate is also required to answer questions *viva voce* on the art of accompanying, on phrasing, and on touch. In the A.R.C.M. examination the student must also be prepared to extemporize and modulate on themes selected by the examiner.

That the accompanist must have a technique well enough equipped to withstand the demands made upon it by the type of solos played on the modern concert platform goes without saying.

Increased Difficulties in Accompanying.

The standard of teclmique increases every generation, and some idea of the magnitude of the

accompanist's art may be gained from the fact that it is no uncommon task to have to accompany works as varied as Maurice Ravel's "Tzigane," Hugo Wolf's songs, Schubert's songs, etc. Such compositions call for more than finger dexterity. They require the type of really musical mind which is most at home with music of a philosophical or speculative type.

The points which the examiner specially considers when listening to a candidate in accompanying are phrasing, pedalling, and expression. The accompanist must ever be on the alert, yet imperturbable, and nothing should seriously disturb him. Turning over quickly and silently is a point which will readily occur to the examiner as a sign of experience on the part of the candidate. It is hardly necessary to add that while it is the accompanist's business to follow the soloist, he must under no circumstances "drag."

The accompanist must ever be ready to help the soloist in moments of difficulty or temporary forgetfulness. In the A.R.C.M. examination, the examiner makes a special point of inquiring as to the candidate's ability to assist soloists in difficulties and to stimulate and restrain them where necessary. The exact amount of influencing and restraining that is permissible can only be determined by experience. Many candidates complain that they do not know exactly how to tackle this part of the syllabus.

Discretion and Sympathy.

Clearly, it is entirely a matter for discretion: one that can only be acquired after a good deal of experience by someone who is from the outset of a naturally sympathetic and tolerant disposition.

Perhaps the worst fault of the average candidate is the tendency (excusable perhaps, but none the less meeting with a deduction of marks by the examiner) to submerge his personality in that of the soloist. Accompanying is not a matter of self-obliteration. A certain amount of personality is demanded of the accompanist, and if this is not always to be sought in superficial technical brilliance, it will assuredly be looked for in the musicianly treatment as revealed in phrasing, pedalling, etc.

In order to succeed in this type of examination, the candidate must create for himself the opportunity of playing accompaniments with fellow-soloists. He must obtain as much rehearsing with string and wood-wind players, to say nothing of vocalists, as is possible in the limited time at his disposal. Here, more than in any other examination subject, *experientia docet.*

Quite a lot can also be gleaned from attending important concerts regularly and listening carefully to the accompaniments. In this fashion the student acquires a sound knowledge of the art which will stand him in good stead when he is examined.

CHAPTER VI

THE VIOLIN CANDIDATE

So far as the string player is concerned, there are certain difficulties, or idiosyncrasies, in connection with the subject that demand a special chapter.

The string player has to surmount technical difficulties with which the pianist, for instance, has no concern at all. It will be obvious that a violinist who proposes to play at an examination some standard concerto or sonata, will require to play it along with pianoforte accompaniment.

This involves the principle of ensemble playing. This, in turn, will call for several rehearsals with the pianist to whom it is proposed to allocate the accompaniment.

While it is true that the majority of various examining bodies provide official accompanists, it is, in my opinion, unwise to trust to these necessarily improvised and invariably inadequate arrangements.

Team Work at Examinations.

Ensemble playing requires, in turn, particular care with regard to rhythm and tempo; so that the candidate is bound to devote more time and attention to points, which in the case of pure solo playing, would be dismissed as too trivial for careful consideration and preparation beforehand.

Again in the case of a percussive instrument such as the piano or organ, there need be no concern with the subtleties of intonation. The pianist, once he has struck the key which sets the string in vibratory motion, can have no further control over the quality of the note produced. Whatever errors he may make, the pianist playing on a perfect instrument can never be out of tune. But the violinist is always pre-occupied with the problem of intonation, the master virtuoso no less than the tyro.

Faulty intonation is attributable to many causes. One of the chief causes, as will readily be understood, is nervousness. We have already discussed, in general terms, the causes and effects of nervousness, with particular reference to examination candidates.

But in so far as nervousness results in effects which are unique to the string player, it will be advisable to reconsider this question solely as from the angle of the string player.

Synchronization of Both Arms.

The first essential, in the playing of any string instrument, is the co-ordination of the bow arm with the left hand. It is absolutely imperative that both left hand and right arm shall synchronize. In the event of an attack of "nerves" it is usually this synchronization which is the first to suffer.

The remedy for this is twofold. First of all the left hand must be pressed down with more than usual firmness. It would perhaps be more correct to describe this pressure as a hammering. Without a decisive movement of the left hand, flawless intonation is impossible.

Therefore the candidate must insist on a clear articulation. Moreover he must see that only the tips of the fingers are used; for anatomical reasons, the tip of the finger provides the best medium for applying force, except, of course, in the case of perfect fifths which, lying across the string, can only be played with the flat of the finger. This is the only exception that can be admitted to the rule that all notes are to be played, irrespective of time value, with the tips of the fingers.

Vibrato and the Nervous Candidate.

In the case of *vibrato* the problem becomes much more complicated. *Vibrato* is a regular, or pronatory, movement obtained solely from the left hand. Now it is obvious that the effect of nervousness is to prodnce an involuntary physical tremor over which the player seems to have no control.

As the *vibrato* is an artificial, and therefore a voluntary, vibratory movement; and as the nervousness results in an involuntary vibration, the problem of the candidate afflicted with examination "nerves" is to adjust the voluntary

or artificial movement with the involuntary movement.

A good deal of assistance in this matter of errors due to nervousness can be obtained by a careful perusal before the examination of the chapter on errors in Dr. Sigmund Freud's book *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life.*

The second remedy is directed towards bowing. Because the bow arm is usually moving at a much slower ratio than the left hand, the effect of nervousness is usually much more pronounced than in the case of the left hand.

Here the remedy is to apply precisely as much force with the right hand as has been applied with the left hand. In this way an equilibrium is obtained which sets at a discount all the effects of nervousness.

The down bow is usually the chief difficulty: if the bow is attacked with too much pressure the result is an unpleasant *sforzando*; if, on the other hand, the bow is started too limply, the effect will be an exaggerated *crescendo*. Both evils are equally to be avoided.

Scale Playing.

The next point is scale playing. In the case of the string player this is complicated by the various bowings and pattern sequences which are possible. Various examining bodies have their specific requirements, and in a book of the present

nature it would be manifestly impossible to lay down any hard and fast rules.

The most that can be said is that the candidate ought to acquaint himself in detail with the various groupings as indicated in the current syllabus of the examination for which he is preparing.

In the case of the violinist he could not find a better textbook than the *Sevcik System* volumes (published by Messrs. Bosworth & Co., 8 Heddon Street, Regent Street, London).

Another source of difficulty is the playing of double stopping. Here the student ought to practise the particular passages with special regard to—

1. Equal pressure on both strings with the left hand.

2. Equal pressure on both strings with the bow arm.

3. Careful discrimination as between minor and major intervals; and as between perfect, augmented and diminished intervals.

Vibrato in double stopping must be reduced to an absolute minimum, because it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain an equal pronatory motion on each string at the same time.

Sliding and Glissando.

The most obvious fault in string playing is a slide that is too pronounced: here the defect can

be rectified by arranging that the left hand covers the *distance on the string* in as *short a space of time* as possible, while the right arm also covers the *distance with the bow* in as *short a distance* as is possible. In this way the equilibrium between the left hand and the bow arm, previously referred to, is maintained.

Sight-reading presents no special difficulties to the string player. All that has been said concerning sight-reading in Chapter VIII can be applied, with obvious modifications, to the violinist.

Before sitting the examination, the candidate ought to assure himself that his strings are in perfect gauge; that is to say, that the various thicknesses of the different strings are in exact proportion one to another. It is scarcely necessary to mention that the bow should be carefully resined in such a manner that the resin is equally distributed throughout the length and breadth of the hairs.

Beyond these few points there is nothing which can be said of the violin candidate which does not apply with equal force to the pianist or the organist.

CHAPTER VII

THE VOCALIST AND THE EXAMINER

As a rule, examinations in past years did not seem to be such an essential qualification to the singer as they were to his brother executants. Apart from a few teachers, who, wishing to exhibit some diploma that would serve as a guarantee of their qualifications and ability to teach singing, sat for the L.R.A.M. or A.R.C.M. diplomas, few singers ever troubled to enter for any examinations demanding more than an elementary degree of musical ability.

In recent years, however, all this has changed, and singers are quite as alive to the importance of these educational credentials as any other members of the musical profession.

Most of the examining bodies offer a wide range of subjects from which to choose—such as Solo Singing, Teaching Singing, Sight Singing, Class Singing, Voice Culture, etc. Many young musicians who contemplate entering the musical profession wisely decide that they will possess, *inter alia*, a tangible qualification that will fortify them for a career as singing teacher. Such a qualification can only be obtained from the important colleges and academies awarding diplomas. Particularly essential is a diploma of this

type to the teacher who aims at obtaining a good post as music master in a secondary or public school, with all the concomitant advantages of security of tenure, pension, etc.

Studying for Singing Examinations.

The method of studying for singing examinations follows very closely that used by instrumentalists, and vocalists would do well to read again what has already appeared in the second chapter on the subject of preparation. It is worth mentioning, however, that as the voice more readily shows the effects of overstrain and fatigue, it is necessary to cut down the time allotted to actual vocal practice in the case of the singer.

Scales constitute the background of the singer's study, and examiners are particularly careful to subject the candidate to a searching test in this department. At the actual examination, it rarely happens that more than a very few scales are asked for, yet the range from which the examiner may choose is so wide that the singer must know all the scales if he wishes to avoid being "canght napping." Nothing should be left to chance.

The set songs are extremely important, and they should be completely mastered before entering the examination. It is always wise to precede the study of a song by a thorough grinding in such vocalizzi as those by Concone and Panofka.

These are musical in a high degree, and enable the singer to focus his attention on purity of tone production, without having the added difficulty of diction to consider.

It is advisable to prepare for singing examinations by taking everything very slowly at first, listening carefully for any faults of production and keeping a very careful watch on the breathing. Intonation is vitally important, and the singer should always be able to sing in tune without relying on the piano accompaniment.

At all singing examinations, examiners look for easy and effortless production, consistency of tone in different registers, and skilful control of the breathing. Intonation is important throughout: while in the solo tests the chief features to be sought for are accuracy in rhythm and actual notes, as well as beauty of expression. Diction should not be overlooked, as any fault in pronunciation or enunciation will mean loss of marks.

Sight-Singing.

As in the case of executants, so with singers, the average standard of sight-reading displayed by candidates is extremely bad. It is no exaggeration to say that 80 per cent of those who sit for singing examinations really deserve *nil* as the mark of their achievement in this department.

Sight-singing is, of course, complicated by the question of notation. For the singer who

aims at music as his profession, staff notation should present no difficulties whatever. But the fact remains that to many thousands of singers the staff is always something of a sealed book.

Particularly in schools, where it is impossible to teach music as thoroughly in class as the nature of the subject demands, the impossibility of using staff notation with any degree of practical success is notorious, so that in the majority of cases singing masters fall back on the use of the *sol-fa* system of notation, a splendid means of reading easily at sight with the minimum of trouble. Yet it should never be forgotten that, even at the most elementary examinations, the ability to sing *a prima vista* from staff notation is essential. In many cases it seems clear that the candidate who, trained on tonic *sol-fa* principles, is asked to sing a tune in staff notation at sight falls back on the cumbrous process of mentally translating the printed notes into mental images of their *sol-fa* equivalents. This is obviously a waste of time, and is, in the bargain, extremely unsafe and unreliable: a single slip and the singer is put definitely off. Hence the necessity for reading staff easily from the very commencement.

The Foundation of Sight-Singing.

It is difficult to say what kind of test the candidate is likely to meet with under normal

examination conditions. Folk songs are very common, and provide an excellent source of practice in sight-singing.

But the actual test itself is not of so much importance as the ability to read correctly and with evident musicianship. A sense of absolute pitch ought to be cultivated and although this is never easy to acquire, it is not nearly so insuperable a task as some imagine.

If the scales have been well studied, a foundation for good sight-singing has been laid, provided that the candidate will utilize this experience of scale-formation. Arpeggios also will provide him with a strong sense of harmonic progression, an immense asset in sight-singing.

Modulatory passages are usually the bugbear of sight-singing, partly because of the difficulty of identifying the particular "pivot" chords and their keys, and partly because of the tendency to sing out of tune in them. This difficulty can be easily overcome by bringing to bear a slight knowledge of harmony on the subject.

The teacher of singing, and particularly those intending to sit for the teacher's diploma of L.R.A.M. or A.R.C.M., should have a very detailed knowledge of the anatomical functions of the larynx, pharynx, etc. Indeed all singers, whether or not their immediate aim is an examination test, should possess a thorough understanding of the physiological processes which lie at

the root of voice production. To this end, one cannot do better than read that excellent text-book by Dr. Worthington and Edgar Evetts entitled *The Mechanics of Singing* (published by Dent).

CHAPTER VII

THE ART OF SIGHT-READING

SIGHT-READING is not, as many candidates (generally, however, the unsuccessful ones) are prone to imagine, a gift possessed by a few of the favoured students. It is quite as susceptible to cultivation as any other technical ability connected with music. The only way to acquire an easy and ready facility for reading unfamiliar music at sight is by making a point of reading as much new music every day as is possible, having regard to the time at the student's disposal.

Sight-reading should not be regarded as a sort of musical typewriting: it is a good deal more than merely registering on the piano or violin a note in lieu of a given symbol.

Sight-reading properly so called is the intelligent transposition into music of what was formerly merely in musical notation. So that sight-reading implies not only the ability to perform the equivalent physical action in order to produce the note called for by a certain musical sign: but, what is far more important, implies the ability to hear in the mind's ear the actual effect of the printed score.

Too much playing by ear has long been recognized as one of the evils which tend to unfit the

student for good reading *a prima vista*. This habit is one far too frequently contracted by beginners who, hearing new and rather fascinating tunes, wish to play them for their own satisfaction. Usually not possessing the music they make an effort to recollect the music, "playing by ear." This is a pernicious habit that should be controlled as soon as it is discovered.

Sight-reading at Elementary Examinations.

It is a great mistake to postpone the serious practice of sight-reading until the later stages of the pupil's work. The practice of sight-reading should begin as early as possible. As soon as the beginner knows his first few lessons he should be taught the habit of reading at sight short phrases that he has never practised before.

Reading music is simply a mechanical achievement similar to that of reading a book. An adult who could not read a book would be regarded nowadays as a mental defective: yet there are thousands of grown-up music students who are quite incapable of reading four consecutive bars at sight without making the most elementary and obvious mistakes.

The player should only attempt such music as is technically within his powers. It is quite enough to have to read quickly at sight without superimposing the additional difficulty of meeting with technical obstacles.

In the piano section the worst offenders are those students who simply cannot read in two staves at once. This rather indicates that while practising they have always mentally divorced the action of the two hands from each other, and regarded the staves in a similar manner.

This is a grave error. This pupil should be taught to realize from the very start that the staves are merely a convenient method of expressing on paper the musical thought of the composer, and that the division of treble and hass between the right and left hands is again merely a matter of convenience. He should be instructed to read the whole stave at once, without breaking it into two separate components.

Bad Errors in Reading.

There are certain errors which recur so persistently in the sight-reading tests at examinations as to convince an experienced examiner of the necessity for considerable practice in sight-reading while preparing for the examination. The low standard of sight-reading which is far too prevalent at most examinations nowadays seems to point to the need for special cultivation.

The practice of sight-reading ought not to be carried on aimlessly, without system, but should be so directed as to train the pupil in two directions: (1) accurate observation, (2) immediate mechanical response to the visual notation.

The gravest fault of candidates is that of paying no attention to the *tempo* of the piece. Some pupils rush ahead at a break-neck pace that is bound, sooner or later, to lead to inevitable disaster—others again, trying to be too cautious, lose marks by playing at such a slow *tempo* as to dislocate the rhythm beyond understanding.

The candidate should realize that the sight-reading test is not imposed as a means of discovering the technical facility in reading a new work, but aims at revealing the musical mentality of the candidate. It is therefore more important that the spirit rather than the letter of the music be faithfully observed.

It is fatal to sacrifice the broad rhythmic and formal idea of the passage selected for a test, to mere accuracy of note and fingering.

Candidates must keep time when sight-reading. It is useless to play without rhythm: nothing is more certain to bring failure on the head of the unfortunate candidate than an attempt to read new music without keeping strictly to the most sensible *tempo*.

Wrong notes by themselves are not of any great consequence and candidates should not worry too much over occasional lapses of this kind.

No special music is required for sight-reading practice. The only requirement is that it shall be within the technical abilities of the player. For those who prefer specially written sight tests I

suggest the various books by Henry Geehl, Dr. Lyon, and Harold Colombatti.

Tonality is another weak point in the reading of most candidates. Many students do not seem to realize the necessity of realizing exactly what key they are supposed to be playing in. Is it minor or major? If minor, is it melodic or harmonic form?

Wrong chords are usually attributable to this neglect of ascertaining the correct tonality. Tonality is not merely a matter of looking at the key signature, for this may be misleading. It is entirely a matter of listening with your ears, particularly in modulatory passages.

Such mistakes as forgetting the presence of accidentals, playing wrong chords, etc., are due to the lack of harmonic training. It is no good looking on music as a succession of isolated notes; the candidate must be taught to regard music from the composer's aspect. Only in this way will he become a reliable sight-reader.

Change of clefs is another fruitful source of mischief. Often this is sheer carelessness, and lack of observation on the candidate's part. Nor is it confined to candidates at examinations, for soloists have actually been known to perform in public works during which they played in the wrong clef!

It is also advisable to be prepared to read from manuscript (particularly orchestral players). While candidates are almost invariably supplied

with printed sight-reading tests, the use of manuscript copy is not unknown.

Hints for the Sight-reader.

Do not read in single notes or isolated bars, but cultivate the habit of taking in a whole four-bar phrase in advance. The best sight-readers always make a point of reading in advance of their playing: thus they are constantly foreshadowing any important changes of *tempo*, key, etc.

Never read merely the melody, leaving the bass to take care of itself. (This applies only to pianists and organists.) In the case of players who have to read two or more staves at sight, the two staves should be regarded as component parts of a whole, and the eye should be disciplined to take the bass clef first, and to take in the treble almost simultaneously.

Glance quickly through the test if possible, and mentally register any fairly important changes of key and time signature.

Do not neglect the dynamic indications such as *crescendo, diminuendo, ff, sfz*, etc.

Be able to recognize chords in any form whatever, and learn to strip the harmonic mould of all its unessential embroidery. Every chord should be instantly recognized; and the student should be able to give its technical name.

When reading any music at sight *never* stop to correct mistakes. You are not allowed to do it at

examinations; and in any event if you stop to go back and repeat a passage, clearly the mind is warned as to what is coming, and the second repetition is not sight-reading at all. When actually *practising* sight-reading tests for examination purposes it is, however, advisable to make a note of the particular type of obstacle which most frequently causes trouble. This can then be made the subject of separate study.

CHAPTER IX

THE MEMORY FACTOR

In former days playing from memory was regarded as an exceptional qualification, and even such great artists as Rubenstein, Carreño, Pugno, Hallé and Esipoff habitually played from the printed score.

Nowadays, examiners are practically unanimous in their demand for memory playing. Tobias Matthay, the famous piano teacher and examiner, used to say that, in his opinion, playing from memory should be imperative at examinations.

Quite apart from the needs of examination candidates, however, the possession of a retentive memory is decidedly an essential part of the equipment of every modern musician: the soloist on the concert platform, the singer in the opera house, and very frequently the conductor in the orchestral pit, are all compelled to commit their repertoire to memory.

Indeed, if we examine the matter closely, we shall soon realize that, without memory, musical appreciation would be an utter impossibility; for it is only by remembering what notes in combination sound like that the listener is enabled to appreciate the logical continuity and formal structure of the music as a whole.

The ability to memorize proves itself on analysis to be little more than the ability to concentrate for lengthy periods, sufficient to ensure the correct knowledge of a work in all its detail. Concentration itself is entirely a matter of will-power: it involves the determination to banish all those irrelevant thoughts and considerations which drift into the mind, tending to divert it from its immediate concern.

There is no memory, however recalcitrant, which will not yield to a system of training planned on scientific lines; it has been proved beyond all shadow of doubt that the possession of memory is not merely an accomplishment confined to the human race, but is a faculty of all organic life, however rudimentary. While the ratio of speed in which the memory responds to external stimuli often varies in different individuals, there can be no doubt that an excellent memory is largely, indeed almost exclusively, the result of systematic training.

Naturally, memory improves with incessant training and constant usage: a conductor like Toscanini, for instance, can easily assimilate and commit to memory the full score of a modern opera in about the same time that the undisciplined amateur takes to memorize Mendelssohn's "Spring Song."

The student should not be misled by the legends of truly phenomenal musical memory into believing

that memory is the product of a sort of genius: nothing could be further from the truth. As a famous musicologist, the late Gerald Cumberland, has truly remarked in his remarkable monograph on the subject: "It is one of the lowest functions of the brain: even idiots possess it."

No doubt interest lies at the root of a good deal of what may be termed for want of a better phrase "natural memorizing"; the piece which one likes is committed to memory far more easily and in a much shorter period than the work for which one has nothing but dislike. Yet in the course of preparing music for examination purposes, it often becomes necessary to memorize music for which the candidate has no special sympathies. It is here that the necessity of cultivating an excellent memorizing technique becomes obvious.

As this book is addressed to students, many of whom will ultimately qualify as music teachers, let me here make the point that the foundations of a first-rate musical memory can be, and ought to be, laid in the earliest lessons. All technical studies, chords, arpeggios, scales, five-finger exercises and simple tunes ought to be committed to memory, thus paving the way for more important work in later years.

One of the most vitally important facts to realize is that all memorizing must be progressive: there must be continuity. It is quite useless, for example, in preparing musical history as an

examination subject, to commit to memory a series of isolated facts and dates.

Such an unscientific method is doomed to failure. *Progression* and *Continuity*: these are the watchwords of success in memorizing. Again, it is useless to practise in single-bar units for this purpose: it is always necessary to practise in phrases or sentences. So it is with any theoretical subjects: in history the student must grasp the significance of extended periods rather than isolated dates.

Memorizing, in the case of one who has not been trained to regard it in the light of an acquired technique, is apt to be slow, irksome and often elusive. The remedy for this lies in persistent effort. A work which seems intractable, resisting memorizing for a considerable period, will often remain more surely fixed in the mind ultimately than a piece easily learnt but as easily lost.

The Visual Memory.

I treat the visual memory first, not because it is the most important or the most commonly used, but because it is common to all musicians whether they be instrumentalists, vocalists, conductors, or composers. The aural and locomotory powers may be considerably different according as the student is a singer or a horn player, yet the visual memory is common property.

The power to memorize by merely seeing

repeatedly is commoner than generally supposed. Sir Walter Scott used to remark that, with him, seeing once was equivalent to remembering. That this excellent form of memorizing is not more generally practised is simply owing to the fact that most students are content to rely exclusively on the locomotory and aural memories. Yet with practice the eye can be trained to memorize the most difficult and involved works with comparative ease.

The visual memory, unfortunately, is usually dimmed by familiarity with the object seen, so that constant reading of music tends to lessen the powers of retentive memory. A pianist who has played the Beethoven sonatas habitually from copy begins to find that it is difficult to memorize them by the purely visual memory alone. Hence the student who relies on the visual memory will have to take care that he master his work quickly, so that his memory and powers of observation are not blunted by undue familiarity with the printed score.

The visual memory is particularly useful for the examination candidate, as it enables him, should the occasion arise, to summon to his assistance a mental image of the printed copy. Indeed, it is often highly developed in first-class soloists, and at least one eminent piano virtuoso, Mr. Frederick Dawson, has observed that when playing from memory he invariably visualizes the

music, as if it were placed on the music-stand before him.

At the beginning, in order to cultivate the visual memory, it is a good thing to make a deliberate plan of memorizing a given number of varied works, solely relying on this visual aspect of memory. This faculty is best cultivated mentally, i.e. without recourse to any instrument. A convenient unit should be selected, such as a four-bar phrase; the student should then close the copy and endeavour to recollect the phrase, and write it out from memory unassisted. Progress at first may be slow, but it is permanent.

The Auditory Memory.

The auditory is, of course, the most thoroughly musical form of memory that we possess: it is not strange, then, that examining bodies attach great importance to aural tests which are really evidential tests of aural memory—the ability to recognize sequences of notes and chords, and identify them by name.

This form of memory is essentially aesthetic, and therefore varies considerably with different persons whose reaction to the particular music in question varies in power. All of us find it easier to memorize the type of music with which we are in aesthetic sympathy than the music which we dislike.

A very elementary form of this auditory

memory is that bugbear of the music teacher, "playing by ear." Many teachers are inclined to regard "playing by ear" as a very vulgar form of amusement, and endeavour to prohibit it. This is a misguided belief: "playing by ear," if directed into proper channels, is an invaluable means of increasing the powers of retention of the aural memory.

In a rudimentary form the auditory memory is a type of the analytical, or intellectual, memory which we shall discuss later. But for the purpose of training the auditory memory it is advisable, indeed imperative, that the ear alone should be relied on, and the power of analysis should not be permitted to afford any assistance to the ear while it is being trained.

Rhythm plays an important part in the auditory memory, particularly in a percussive instrument such as the piano. The ear ought to be attuned to realize the finer shades of rhythmic effect so as to reproduce these niceties to perfection.

The exact harmonic lay-out is often difficult to memorize by the ear alone, for although the memory readily apprehends the sequences of harmonic patterns, it does not always quickly realize the exact spacing and arrangement of notes within a chord.

That type of music which proves most intractable to memorizing is the contrapuntal style of Bach and Brahms. Here, clearly, the obstacle to progress is caused by the necessity to divide the

receptive mind into separate, music-tight compartments, so that the divergent streams of melody can run along unimpeded. Clearly, the ability to think in terms of counterpoint is the faculty of thinking of three or four things at one and the same time. That is the reason why contrapuntal music, such as fugues, canons and the like, usually prove the hardest nuts that the memorizer has to crack.

The Locomotive Memory.

Of all the phases of musical memory, the locomotive memory is undoubtedly the most fascinating: it is constituted by the combination of a purely physical muscular action and a tactile impression communicated to the brain by means of the sense of touch. But although from the physicist's point of view, this locomotive memory is the most absorbing type of memory, it is least important from the musician's point of view.

There is no doubt that a person both blind and deaf could learn to play any musical instrument, merely by the use of this sense of locomotion—whether the results would compensate the unfortunate student for the time taken up in study is perhaps another matter.

There are, unfortunately, far too many examination candidates who rely, consciously or unconsciously, on their locomotive memory solely, with often disastrous results. Gerald Cumberland's

words on this important matter ought to be very carefully digested: "The ordinary pianist," he remarks, "who does not take his work very seriously and has made no logical effort to *train* his musical memory, employs, consciously or unconsciously, only his hand muscles and his ears when committing a piece of music to memory. A singer of the same type uses his throat and chest muscles; a flautist the muscles of his lips and hands. Many amateurs, and practically all children who have been incorrectly taught, commit music to memory by playing it over and over again, until by sheer habit their fingers fall mechanically upon the right notes."

But while this is undoubtedly true in the main, the locomotive memory is an excellent crutch when used properly and kept well under control. Indeed, for the examinee, it is very necessary that he should rely at times on this form of memorizing.

In all practical examinations, regard is had to the *standard* of performance, and this consequently involves a consideration of the candidate's fingering and pedalling (in the case of pianists), and fingering and bowing (in the case of stringed instrumentalists).

To this extent it is incumbent upon the candidate to see that his technical equipage is uniform and consistent: the fingering and phrasing, for instance, should always be played alike—in other words, they should be memorized also.

So, too, the pianoforte student should carefully observe the necessity of memorizing the pedal changes, etc. Indeed it might be advisable, in memorizing certain works of more than average complexity, to leave the pedalling until last, considering it separately so as not to confuse the mind. When the music itself has been memorized, the pedalling can then be attacked with the copy before the player.

This locomotory sense is, of course, familiar to every teacher whose work has brought him in contact with beginners. At the piano or organ keyboard, for instance, the distribution of black and white keys in definite series becomes so very familiar, that after even a month's practice, the child is as conversant with the keyboard as with his toys.

Yet, that this familiarity is entirely dependent upon, and subservient to, the sensory impressions of touch and locomotion is amply demonstrated by the first feeble efforts of the efficient pianists to play on the organ pedals. Despite his expert acquaintance with the piano keyboard and the knowledge that the pedals are laid out in identical fashion, he is just as much embarrassed with the strangeness of the new habitat as the youngster first confronted with the piano keys.

In the case of children and adults who have been brought into contact with music at a comparatively late period in life, the locomotive faculty

as represented by the sense of touch and the sense of muscular activity is almost the only reliable means of rapid memorizing; but it is very mechanical and occupies a comparatively long time. Furthermore, all wrong notes played during the period of practice are apt to be registered on the memory, so that a good deal of extra effort is required to cancel the erroneous impressions created.

It is very necessary to warn the student that in developing the faculty of locomotory memory it is essential to stick to one way of fingering, bowing, pedalling, etc. He should never vacillate between two alternative fingerings, but should deliberately adopt one and consistently adhere to it, so that the memory is given a reasonable opportunity of acquiring the exact movements involved. The muscular mind will be rendered totally impotent if the student habitually alters his methods of fingering or bowing.

The Combined Memories.

It is apparent, then, that the one successful way whereby to predetermine the presence of an unfailing memory can only be achieved by combining these three different systems of sensory reception, which I have referred to as (1) visual, (2) auditory and (3) locomotive. In simple terms they represent the familiar senses of sight, hearing, and touch.

Time is often an important element in memorizing. The rate at which the memory is capable of absorbing impressions cannot be unduly forced: there are definite limits to the speed at which music can be memorized, and this speed varies enormously in different individuals. If time is an important consideration, then the pace may be accelerated by utilizing the analytical system of memorizing detailed later in this chapter, under the title "The Analytical Method."

Students who have become accustomed to relying only on a single method of memorizing will soon discover the enormous strides made when they bring into co-ordination the other two methods.

I would warn the student, however, that it is impossible in the great majority of cases to reduce the business of memorizing to a simple system consisting of three equal parts.

Memory is often determined by considerations of a wholly psychological nature. Different senses naturally appeal to different mentalities, and although much can be done to develop the latent memory, there can be no useful purpose served by denying to one species of memory its relative superiority.

If a musician possesses a particularly keen sense of touch, or an unusually powerful faculty of remembering visual signs, then let him develop this gift to the utmost extent. Yet at the same

time the wise man will always contemplate the possibilities of placing too great a strain on any one type of memory. It is always safest to develop the other latent forms, so that in the event of a temporary breakdown of that type of memory on which he is accustomed to rely, he will still have the others to fall back on.

It is quite logical to suppose that if a player can memorize an entire sonata by means of the locomotory memory or the visual memory, he ought to be able to memorize the same work in a fraction of that period by calling in the various factors, assuming that all are equally well developed.

This, indeed, is the truth *provided that the other forms of memory are trained to a pitch of equal efficiency*. I stress this, because it is vitally important for the student to realize that it is useless for him to rely on these other forms if they are in an untutored state: the untrained memory is like a garden over-run by weeds—perfectly worthless for the purposes of sowing seeds: hence the necessity of disciplining one's self to an intensive course of memory-training which will effectually banish all those habits of carelessness and laziness which are the *sequelæ* of untrained memories.

A certain length of time should be allotted each day for "silent practice" in memorizing: that is a period during which the pieces are gone rapidly over in the mind, while away from the instrument.

All mistakes should be carefully noted, and subsequently rectified by comparison with the score. It is this type of mental concentration which builds up that precious store of self-criticism so necessary to the modern musician.

The result of a well-organized memory should be that the player is able at any time (1) to play his piece, (2) to write it out in manuscript. This last is an invaluable test, and serves to demonstrate the efficiency or otherwise of his memorizing. The practice of writing out examination test pieces is one which cannot be too highly recommended, and it is really surprising that students do not resort more to writing out music for practice, not only as an excellent check on their powers of retention, but also because of the illuminating insight that such a method provides into the style and structure of the composition. If the piece is properly memorized beyond all doubt, then one should not have the slightest difficulty in putting it down on paper. If the student fails in this simple test, he has not yet mastered his memory.

Interpretation and Memory.

One of the most vexed questions that always arises in any consideration of this important topic of memorizing is whether or no the interpretation ought to be committed to memory as well as the more technical performance.

Many musicians regard interpretation as a sort

of improvised inspiration which can only come on rare occasions. This is quite misleading, for, as Tobias Matthay has demonstrated in his remarkable textbook on this subject, musical interpretation is quite as susceptible to logical analysis as any other form.

It is therefore futile to divorce the interpretation from the technique in practising: the two should always run along in harness, and to this extent it is imperative that the scheme of emotional changes should be planned with an architectural sense of proportion.

As a general rule, in the case of students, the interpretative process is one to which no great attention is paid. Yet it is patent that the only justification for a musical performance lies in the interpretation which the player brings to bear on the work.

In programme music especially, the knowledge of the "story" which the composer is depicting in terms of sound is invaluable: it conditions the interpretation and considerably assists the task of committing the composition to memory.

This is not to suggest that a rigid schedule of emotions is to be drafted, to which the soloist will adhere at all costs; but the consistent adherence to a definite interpretative scheme is of more than passing importance to the candidate. Nothing is worse in the eyes of the examiner than a performer who allows his emotions to carry him

away. Every student should have a well-planned chart of the dynamic changes, the climaxes, changes of expression, *tempo*, etc., fixed firmly in his mind if he hopes to succeed at examinations. No doubt the finest performances are often given on the spur of the moment, largely dictated by an inspiration which resists all attempts to summon it at any given time; but the examinee cannot afford to wait on inspiration. He must be prepared to give a finished performance at any time fixed by the board of examiners. Hence arises the necessity of preparing a suitable rendition, interpretative as well as technological, and committing it to memory.

The Analytical Method.

The analytical method of memory consists in stripping the work which it is desired to memorize into its component parts in such a fashion that each subsequent reproduction of the work in question is merely a matter of re-assembling the "spare parts," a task that becomes easier with constant practice.

The first thing is to prepare a careful survey of the formal structure of the work—not merely a hurried paper analysis such as a candidate in an examination for form might turn out, but a detailed "map" of the work, its architectural features and its system of construction. Play the work through several times, slowly and deliberately.

all the while listening intelligently to its themes, the technical methods of development, etc. Then attempt to dissect the music into its component elements and so learn how to reconstruct it again.

What are these elements? First we can say melody and rhythm. But this division would be too rudimentary, so we experiment and find that the most useful grouping of the primary essentials is: (1) melody, (2) rhythm, (3) tonality, (4) harmony, (5) counterpoint.

For the analytical method of memorizing, it will be necessary to observe in precisely what proportion these elements are assembled. Because this method involves a combination of visual and auditory memories, and also brings to bear on the subject an intellectual faculty very similar to that involved in the solution of a mathematical problem, it follows that the analytical method is the most reliable as well as being the most scientific system of memorizing music.

For the student unaccustomed to this system, it will be necessary to insist on a considerable amount of self-discipline. Play slowly and deliberately, so as to realize the full effects of the diverse musical devices, the varied rhythms, the melodies and the scales and modes on which they are built, tonalities and modulations (particularly in works of considerable proportions such as the sonata and concerto) and the exact sequence of tonal

relationships, harmonic schemes, dissonances, suspensions, sequences, etc., and especially in contrapuntal writing the exact effect of each part, independently and in co-ordination with the others. Organists, in particular, ought to cultivate this system of memorizing polyphonic music as much as possible.

Landmarks that Assist.

The memory should be so trained as to do its work more or less mechanically or subconsciously. Mnemonics should be avoided as far as possible, yet there may be occasions when, owing to pressure of time or other cogent reason, it is not possible to memorize a work according to the scientific principles previously laid down.

The faculty of imagination can often be used to suggest landmarks or mnemonics that will serve to assist the player in clearing away a stumbling block.

In programme music, for instance, the literary basis of the music can often be made as a valuable mnemonic, a precious link for memorizing purposes. A "story" is often easier to remember *in toto* than a piece of music: hence the recollection of the fable will considerably assist the functions of memory to a considerable extent.

Then there are the particular difficulties or awkward passages which in themselves constitute specific landmarks. A difficult leap, a passage

which abounds in peculiar dissonances, or an unusual cadence—all these will serve as mnemonics on which the memory can rely.

Rhyming mnemonics are fairly common for learning the subjects of the Bach "Forty-Eight Fugues": no doubt it is open to purists like Harold Samuel to object to great works of this kind being spoilt by association with doggerel which can lay no claim to literary elegance; but as an equally capable teacher, Dr. Prout, has remarked, they are invaluable for examination candidates who are often working against time.

It is an excellent plan to keep a list of pieces memorized on which is entered data concerning the actual time taken in committing to memory, the number of difficulties encountered and the amount of practice required before surmounting them. In this way the memory will become a source of analysis: its weak and strong points will be clearly indicated and the student will be thus able to form some estimate of those points in his technique which call for special attention.

Improving a Weak Memory.

The difficulty of strengthening a weak memory, or directing into proper channels a memory that has long been neglected and allowed to "run to seed," is complicated by the fact that the vast majority of students do not regard the subject as one which merits special attention.

Quite often the novice imagines, quite erroneously, that memorizing is a sort of infallible corollary to the ordinary practice hour. Many candidates are inclined to imagine that, in the long run, a piece is found to be memorized in proportion to the amount of practice put in on the purely technical difficulties. This is quite a mistaken notion; the technical aspect should be mastered first: the process of committing to memory being a totally independent matter.

Nervousness is another cause that contributes to the failure to play well from memory. Any tendency to hesitation, any slip caused through the inability to call the thing desired to mind in a given time, is bound to cause trouble. This doubting and lack of self-confidence is productive of most of the failures in examinations. Tobias Matthay has truthfully observed: "The moment you begin to doubt your ability to go on, you will fail: you will prevent the natural action of the mind: its essential onwardness." When playing from memory at examinations, the player should banish all fears of "forgetting." He should not dream of what will happen if his memory temporarily deserts him: but should let the memory do its own work without prompting. Do not worry about what comes next, but concentrate on the passage being played. In memorizing, the best maxim to observe is that of letting the future bars take care of themselves.

Constant revision of all memorized pieces is a *sine qua non*. The memory can only be trusted to discharge its duties faithfully so long as it is on familiar ground. In order to test the ability to play from memory (especially long and involved works in sonata form) the student should make a practice of carefully checking his memorized version with the aid of the printed score. It is remarkable how frequently a sentence or phrase is forgotten without the soloist being aware that anything is amiss.

The perfect memory must not only be automatic but should be so completely under control that it responds instantaneously. A memory which only yields to persuasion and coaxing is no memory at all. But although the memory must necessarily be automatic, the performance must never be! It is better to play from music and lose a few marks than play like a machine and lose not only marks, but reputation as well.

Breakdown of Memory.

One of the most frightful nightmares in a concert artist's career is the fear of a "breakdown of memory." We are familiar with many instances of this sudden paralysis of memory. I once recollect that great violinist Eugene Ysaye forgetting the exact sequence of variations in the Kreutzer Sonata of Beethoven. Alfred Cortot, too, after a concert once confessed that in playing

the *Chorale, Prelude and Fugue* of César Franck his mind had temporarily become a complete blank, and he had found it impossible for some sixteen bars to recollect the original score of Franck. Finally, after a clever improvisation, he contrived to make his way through the labyrinth of forgetfulness and recapture the passage that had previously eluded him.

Sometimes, as a result of temporary mind-wandering, a player comes to grief in a composition, with the result that ever afterwards in playing that identical work he is inclined to be nervous. This kind of fear rapidly develops into a state of permanent obsession. It is fatal to coerce one's self into believing that one cannot remember the passage. Lowell, the famous America text writer, has observed: "Attention is at the basis of all memory."

One prolific source of breakdowns is the presence of "repeats." If these are indicated, as they invariably are, either by the usual abbreviated "repeat sign," or the presence of a first and second-time bar, it sometimes occurs to a player to ask himself while actually performing: "Have I really done the repeat? Am I playing this for the first time or the second?" This curious incapacity to remember whether the repeat has actually been observed or not is by no means confined to those playing from memory: it often provokes the musician reading from score. This indicates

mind-wandering and should be regarded as a danger signal that the mind is flagging in its duty to concentrate.

A working knowledge of practical harmony is very desirable as this considerably lightens the task of memorizing. Obviously, a person who knows harmony realizes that the chord G B D F is a dominant seventh, and consequently thinks of it as a single unit; whereas one without a groundwork of harmony merely regards the chord as four disconnected notes, and thus increases his labours four-fold.

Attention to health is also another matter of importance for the student who would possess a first-rate musical memory. It has been well said that a healthy body is the foundation for a good memory, for the memory is dependent upon the proper supply of blood to the brain, and as the blood supply is determined by the general condition of health, in like manner should a student carefully preserve his body.

Testing the Apparatus.

It is an excellent idea to check your memorizing regularly. This can be easiest done in one or other of two ways: (*a*) By means of gramophone records, or (*b*) with the assistance of musical friends who will correct your memorized performance by following the copy, and pointing out any errors or lapses.

Some students say: "Do not play from memory until you feel absolutely certain that your performance will be note perfect." If you wait for this you might wait for years. You must accustom yourself to dispensing with the copy as soon as possible. Every time you play the work through, you must aim at adding one more step to the ladder which will enable you to escape from the tyranny of the score.

If the student attacks the problem of the weak memory in the manner sketched in the foregoing pages, he cannot fail to succeed in gaining control over his powers of recollection. Some students will find that success comes earlier than others; but all will discover that the more one is disciplined to the task of memorizing with regularity, the more accustomed the mind will become to the task, and the greater the progress made in subsequent attempts.

It sometimes happens that musicians, often eminent ones, possess the remarkable ability of memorizing by a sort of intuition. Thus the late Leonard Borwick, one of our greatest pianists, once remarked: "You ask how I memorize? I can scarcely explain that. I have no special way; it does itself. What I mean is that when I know the composition through and through, there is no question of my not remembering it! I *know* it. I do not have to pick the piece apart or learn each hand alone. Nor do I learn by phrases. I study it

until every note is mentally absorbed and then it is mine. I can play it without the notes just as well as with them. When I play with orchestra I know all the orchestral parts: I learn the work as a whole. It is necessary for a soloist to do this, for often in piano-concertos and always in violin-concertos the solo instrument does not carry the bass. It would be very precarious for the solo artist not to be conversant with the bass or foundation part of the work: he might easily come to grief."

This observation coming from so weighty an authority is worth considering: but the student should guard against taking it too literally. All that Mr. Borwick means is that he has not analysed his own powers of memorizing. He should guard against attributing to the famous pianist any suggestion that memorizing is simply a matter of guess-work: that it most certainly is not. It is as much a science as algebra or chemistry.

The Memory and Paper Work Examinations.

Many students, who find no particular difficulty in memorizing music, often experience a considerable amount of difficulty in committing to memory purely theoretical subjects, as, for example, the facts required to pass an examination in history of music, or in musical analysis.

They do not seem to possess, or rather to have

cultivated, the faculty of remembering, at any given instant, a whole sequence of isolated facts. The best way to overcome this is by practising answering specimen examination papers. All questions run on fairly stereotyped lines: a perusal of past examination papers will enable the candidate to amass a stock of representative problems. From these he can gauge the type of answer required. He can then prepare suitable answers.

It is not necessary to memorize the entire contents of these answers in voluminous detail: all that is required is to have ready, on the tip of one's tongue, a number of headings, divisions and subdivisions, around which the answer can be written.

It is an excellent idea to prepare a number of slips of paper of convenient size on which are written the main headings of his subject, so that one can readily have before one a bird's eye-view of the subject. It is more important to have a whole period in clear perspective at the expense of a few subsidiary details than a mass of ill-digested facts unrelated to one another.

Frequent revision is as essential in paper work as in the practical sides. I recommend the student to keep handy a stock of these slips in his pocket, so that he can test himself from time to time at any odd moment such as when travelling in train or bus. In this way time which otherwise hangs on

the hands can be utilized in strengthening the memory. It is really surprising what wonders a few minutes per day in this fashion will work!

Memorizing and Sight-reading.

Yet, important as the necessity of memorizing music is to the candidate, he should not overlook the fact that sight-reading is equally as important in the eyes of the examiner.

It is well known that too much insistence on memorizing often results in an incapacity to read music at sight. Naturally the player who has always become accustomed to play from memory and never at sight is more or less on *terra incognita* when asked by the examiner to read a piece of music that is strange to him, *a prima vista.*

So that, however desirable it may be to increase the powers of memorizing, it should not be done at the expense of time spent in reading new music.

On the other hand, sight-reading with its necessary preoccupation with visual considerations is inclined to blind the ear somewhat to details which could not escape the soloist playing from memory, and accordingly left with his powers of self-criticism unimpaired.

At the same time, hasty memorization may lead to precisely the same evil: the visual, aural, or tactile memory may be so preoccupied with the task of recalling the none-too-vivid impressions of a hastily prepared piece, that all regard for detail

is swamped by the necessity for recalling elusive passages in the nick of time.

The student then has to preserve a balance between sight-reading and memorizing so that he is equally proficient in both.

The Benefits of Memorizing.

The benefits of memorizing cannot be overestimated. Apart altogether from the excellent mental training which is inseparable from the concentration of sustained memorizing, the realization that one is able to play from memory, secure in the knowledge that a slip is almost impossible, acts as a tremendous stimulant and increases the will-power and nervous stamina.

The playing becomes emancipated from many details which, trivial as they may be in themselves, often combine to defeat the best intentions of an ambitious and earnest student. The freedom from the necessity to turn pages, or the relief from the drudgery of peering at small and indistinct music type in artificial light are only two instances of the additional benefits that memorizing confers upon musicians. The eye and ear are left free to devote their undivided attention to the actual performance untrammelled by considerations of "reading."

Furthermore, if the student has trained himself to memorize partially by means of the analytical method, his appreciation of the work he is playing *qua* music rises by leaps and bounds.

Memorizing should be taught and studied as a separate subject: it is really quite futile for a teacher to instruct a pupil to bring the next lesson prepared "by heart" without indicating something of the lines along which that pupil ought to work in order to gain the desired results.

CHAPTER X

THE EXAMINER'S POINT OF VIEW

HITHERTO our approach to examinations has been rather from the candidate's point of view. We shall now look at the matter from another angle —that of the examiner. We shall endeavour to pierce the veil of mystery that overhangs the man who holds in his hands the fate of the candidate. If we know what the examiner wants, if we can put ourselves in his place for a brief period, we shall be in the enviable position of being able to anticipate intelligently his requirements, and this, as every candidate will realize, is half the victory.

Examiners, by virtue of their uncongenial and thankless task, are not by any means a well-liked race of men. A man who undertakes to tell the truth about an intimate matter such as a musical performance is not likely to be regarded with feelings of gratitude when he feels it incumbent on him to fail a candidate.

It is natural for the candidate who has failed to regard the examiner as his *bête noire*. Students are always prone to blame examiners for faults which ought to be laid at their own door.

The Examiner : Only Human.

It would be idle to suggest that examiners as a race are perfect: like most human beings they

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suffer from personal idiosyncrasies that may affect for better or worse their opinion of a candidate's performance.

Examiners cannot be expected to display more than the average patience and tact. If candidates without an earthly chance will persist in sitting examinations, they must not grumble if they find the examiner often a tough nut to crack. If you fail, do not lay the blame on the examiner and pretend that he doesn't know his business. For the possibility of an unqualified examiner can nowadays be ruled out of consideration. No doubt in days gone by, it occasionally happened that an inefficient person contrived to slip into the list of examiners, but nowadays no reputable college can afford the stigma of having on its board an incompetent musician.

Exactly what constitutes a qualified man it is not within the province of the present book to determine: although, within living recollection, much capital was made out of the fact that at Cambridge University the Board of Examiners once included, at one and the same time, three musicians: Sir Charles V. Stanford, Sir A. C. Mackenzie and Mr. T. Wigham, none of whom possessed a University degree, yet who were sitting in adjudication on candidates for Mus.Bac. and Mus.Doc.!

The examiner does not look for perfection in candidates; he is satisfied with a bare minimum

of talent allied to technique. The candidate need not regard him as a sort of unapproachable ogre. On the contrary, the examiner can be most helpful in advice.

"Legitimate" and "Illegitimate" Modes of Performance.

The examination is not only a means of testing for certain results: if it is to be at all justifiable the examination must have regard to the means whereby the results are arrived at. Hence the distinction between a "legitimate" and an "illegitimate" style in performance.

In singing—the voice production; in organ-playing—the pedalling and registration; in pianists—the digital technique and pedalling; in string playing—the tone-production and bowing; these are all matters in which the legitimate style is an important factor. The processes of fingering, of bowing, of articulation, etc., often determine the legitimacy or otherwise of a player's style. Fingering, particularly, reveals the truth as to the candidate's past training.

No doubt opinions may differ as to the expediency or otherwise of a particular method of fingering a certain passage. Yet, allowing always for such divergence, there still remains the genuine truth of the proposition that an "illegitimate" fingering is instantly recognized by the examiner who accordingly deducts marks from the candidate.

In the teaching examinations of the L.R.A.M. diploma and in the "Art of Teaching" paper set by all entrants for the higher diplomas of the Trinity College of Music, tests are set wherein the candidate is required to mark the most suitable fingering (and bowing in the case of string players) for a given passage. This is a searching test of the candidate's ability to indicate a common-sense fingering that accords with legitimate principles.

Sight-Reading Tests.

The sight-reading test is usually responsible for a large crop of failures at every sitting. So important is this subject in the modern musical examination, that it has been deemed necessary to devote an entire chapter to its consideration. (See Chapter VIII.) Even so, its importance merits further discussion in the present chapter.

The sight-reading test affords a valuable clue for the examiner as to the candidate's attitude towards music generally, as well as to the limitations of his technique. An examiner is not informed how many years a candidate has been engaged in preparing for the examination. The student may have been practising at the test pieces for ages, yet the examiner has only the finished product before him to go from. But the sight-reading test furnishes him with means of ascertaining in a few minutes the exact qualifications of the entrant.

On the whole, the consensus of opinion among experienced examiners is that the standard of sight-reading is deplorably low. The average string or orchestral player is usually better equipped to read at sight than the pianist: a state of affairs explicable partially on the hypothesis that players of orchestral instruments have more opportunities for sight-reading than pianists, and partly because the violinist or 'cellist has only a single staff to read, whereas a pianist has not only two (and possibly three) staves to read simultaneously, but in each he may have a considerable number of chords, or the writing may be contrapuntal in style.

The most flagrant offences in piano-playing, tabulated for the convenience of those candidates preparing for a piano examination are these—

1. Taking too quick a *tempo* at the outset, thus making reading a technical impossibility.
2. Failing to notice changes of time-signature.
3. Failing to notice changes of key.
4. Ignoring changes of clef.

It is quite apparent to the examiner in the majority of these cases that candidates are not really "hearing" what they play. They seem to be working out a purely abstract mathematical calculation, with the result that the music they are attempting to play, regarded as music, is destitute of coherence and intelligibility.

Nor is it enough that the candidate is able to

play the notes he sees, and gives to each its appropriate signification on the instrument: he must be able to realize their meaning long before he attempts to render them into action. The copy should possess something more than a purely mechanical aspect; it should represent in a word —MUSIC!

Persistent Faults in Candidates.

The most persistent faults in candidates run along fairly constant grooves. The most glaring faults are slipshod playing, inattention to accurate rhythmic values, slovenly playing, lazy and vague ideas as to phraseology, and all the minor flaws that owe their origin to gross carelessness.

While all examiners make allowances for the anxiousness of the occasion, the unfamiliar surroundings and the strangeness of playing under the most trying of conditions; while the examiner who knows his business is prepared to make favourable concessions in these respects, it is impossible to expect him to pardon faults directly and obviously attributable to carelessness and slackness.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the hesitancy of the candidate afflicted with "examination nerves" and the work of the student who has not properly laid the foundations of a good technique; but the difficulty does not last long. The distinction soon becomes obvious.

One of the worst faults is that of ignoring the proper value of rests and pauses. Some students seem incapable of holding out a semibreve until the proper time for its release is reached.

The Necessity for Rhythm.

Others again do not play with sufficient rhythmic clarity to make the difference between $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ times readily apparent.

If it were possible to prepare a census of mistakes at examinations, it would be found that more marks were forfeited through neglect of time-keeping than from all other causes put together.

Too many candidates seem to imagine that as long as they play the right notes, they are entitled to a pass. Note accuracy by itself is nothing: what the examiner looks for is the evidence of a genuine musical talent. A wrong note here or there counts for little. But such errors as playing habitually out of time, completely ignoring dynamic indications such as *pp–ff*, *sforzando*, etc., cannot be overlooked as coming within the category of "mere slips."

In sight-reading, especially, this sense of rhythm is most useful. Without a regard for the principles of logical rhythmic phrasing, the sight-reading test is reduced to an absurdity. Here again, it is of no use whatever playing the right notes, if the time is butchered.

This lack of rhythmic proportion, which is such

a distressing feature in the playing of fifty per cent of candidates, is traceable to inexperience in ensemble-playing. All candidates should make a point of playing and singing with fellow musicians, so as to acquire plenty of experience in rigorous time-keeping. Too much solo playing tends to make the student forget the necessity for adhering to a regular metronomic pace.

Final Hints to Candidates.

If you are not sufficiently prepared, take the obvious course and postpone the sitting. It is a most foolish policy to sit any examination on the off-chance that by good fortune you may scrape through. Unless you have the luck of a lottery prizewinner, you will assuredly fail; and a failure is apt to turn sweet ambition into sour discontent.

At the same time, many students possess a sort of inferiority complex which results in their being extremely anxious to grasp any straw as an excuse for not sitting the examination looming ahead. To these, only one piece of advice is permissible: Go ahead and plunge straight into the thick of it. "Faint heart ne'er won fair examiner yet."

As the examiner does not have sufficient time at his disposal to hear a work all through, he will select the most important extracts and pass judgment on these. To those who suggest that this is hardly fair, it can only be replied that there

is ample justification for the curtness of the method. After all, there is no need to eat a whole plateful of burnt porridge in order to decide that it is spoilt.

As the examination is not merely a test of the candidate's technical and musical skill, but also of his resource and ingenuity, he should be careful to respond to the examiner's *viva voce* questions quickly and alertly.

Nervousness at examinations will always be taken into consideration. The examiner recognizes it and makes allowances accordingly. A good deal of this type of nervousness is due to the failure to realize that the examiner is merely there in the capacity of an intelligent critic. He is not out to defeat the candidate, but merely to give expression to his candid opinions.

Whatever else happens, the candidate should be warned against mind-wandering. Concentration is most essential at any examination. The candidate will soon find his nervousness vanishing in proportion to his increasing absorption into the work in hand.

Listen carefully to the examiner's requests. If he asks you to play the scale of B minor, harmonic form, be careful that you do not play him the melodic form. If you do not understand what an examiner is asking you, don't be afraid to explain your difficulty. He will be much more able to assist you then, than if you remain silent and

waste time in trying to puzzle out for yourself his meaning.

Lastly, and most important of all, see that you satisfy the examiner to the best of your ability. Let him see that you do really know something about music: you need not do this obtrusively. It can be done in many slight ways.

Combating Examination "Nerves."

Nervousness is the bane of the examination candidate. Yet it is not confined to him, for some of the greatest soloists have confessed to extreme nervousness when playing in public.

The secret of curing nervousness is simple. It lies in the exercise of will-power. If the mind is kept concentrated on the work in hand, the "nerves" will be forgotten completely. Of course, it need hardly be said that the candidate must have complete mastery of the test pieces to be played. In the absence of this mastery, there is a corresponding lack of confidence, which goes far to undermine the player's stability and naturally leads to a feeling of insecurity that ultimately communicates itself to the playing.

The control of nerves is largely a matter of will-power. The acrobat, who walks across a gaping abyss with only a thin tight-rope as a support, is exercising his will-power and refusing to give way to panic. This is what the candidate must do. Naturally, the candidate under

examination condition can never be so completely self-possessed and detached from his immediate surroundings as he is, for instance, in his own music room at home. Yet he can minimize the distracting effects of the strange atmosphere by keeping himself well disciplined by will-power and concentration on the subject in hand.

Assuming that the student can play the test-piece perfectly well, in a creditable fashion that will satisfy the examiner, the best plan is for him to stop thinking about the examination altogether. It is a great mistake to overwork a few days before the event: it is a far more successful policy to relax ever so slightly before the actual day of examination and engage oneself in a little light exercise or amusement, leaving the mind fresh and unimpaired. Keep the health well up to concert pitch, and do not start discussing your probable chances of success or failure with fellow candidates.

Never take any stimulants before an examination: they will cloud your brain and blind your finer critical perceptions. Do not go to the examination hall too early, with the result that you get "all worked up" into a highly nervous state long before you are due to be heard. Do not start wondering what the examiner is thinking about your performance, but concentrate on your own work. In this way you will banish nervousness.

In paper work the candidate must see that all the questions asked are answered as required. Do

not answer more or less, and make sure that every question is properly numbered in accordance with the test paper. Do not omit to put your name on the outside of the examination sheet, together with any other particulars that may be required for the purposes of identification.

In bringing the present book to a conclusion, we realize that the examination system has proven itself to be one of enduring benefit to music students. The training that is entailed in preparing for any particular examination leaves its lasting effects on the mind. The knowledge that one has succeeded in a given examination fortifies the musician, and gives him encouragement to climb still farther up the ladder that leads to success. Farther, if the student takes to heart all that has been said concerning the various aspects of attacking examinations, he will have acquired a method of study that will ultimately save much time and temper. Economy of time and energy is more necessary to the examination candidate than to any other musician.

The examination system has resisted attacks made upon it from time to time, and it is at present in a stronger position than ever it was. Success, qualifications, and often one's professional career are conditioned by successfully passing an examination. The few precepts that have been given in the foregoing pages will materially help, if carried out logically and systematically, to a successful issue.

APPENDIX

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AUER, L.	Violin Playing (Duckworth).
RIVARDE, A.	The Violin and its Technique (Macmillan).
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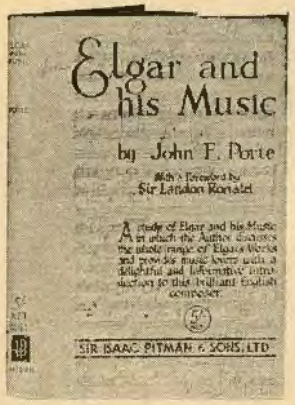

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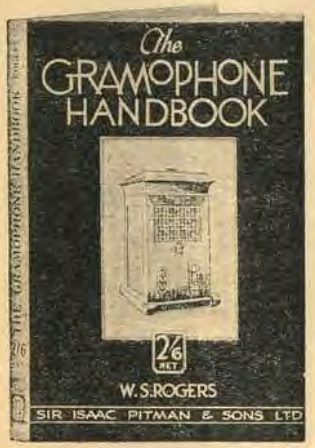

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