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Existential Piano Teacher: The Application of Jean-Paul Sartre's Philosophy to Piano Instruction In a Higher Educational Setting

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

EXISTENTIAL PIANO TEACHER: THE APPLICATION OF JEAN-PAUL
SARTRE'S PHILOSOPHY TO PIANO INSTRUCTION IN A HIGHER
EDUCATIONAL SETTING

By

Julia Vladimirovna Mortyakova

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2009

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Existential Piano Teacher: The Application of
Jean-Paul Sartre's Philosophy to Piano Instruction
In a Higher Educational Setting.

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Abstract of a doctoral essay at the University of Miami.

Doctoral essay supervised by Professor Rosalina G. Sackstein
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This essay uses existential ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre to provide a philosophy of college piano performance teaching which includes awareness of freedom, abandonment and responsibility as a prerequisite for student-teacher interaction. To set the stage for the interaction the study uses Sartre's philosophy, illustrated with concrete examples from the world of piano teaching and performing, to describe what it means to be human.

The author applies Sartre's writings about literature to support the idea of an engaged performance, relating it to existential psychoanalysis, making the performer and audience member realize freedom through choice, while addressing ideas of abandonment and performance anxiety. Sartre's philosophy is used to identify the roles both teachers and students play in the college environment as people and as performers. The study with the help of existentialism, describes the interaction between the different elements: teacher, student, performer, and human being, and provides a better understanding of the complexity of the pupil/professor relationship in the college piano performance program.

**This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. Craig Nies. Thank you for
being a wonderful teacher.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter | Page |
|---|------|
| 1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Need for Study | 2 |
| Overview of Sartre’s Existential Philosophy..... | 4 |
| Statement of Purpose..... | 13 |
| Research Questions..... | 13 |
| Delimitations | 14 |
| Definitions - Sartre’s Special Terminology | 15 |
| 2 LITERATURE REVIEW | 17 |
| Interpretation in Performance | 17 |
| Teaching Philosophy..... | 18 |
| Music Education Philosophy | 19 |
| Music Philosophy | 20 |
| Piano Teaching Philosophy | 20 |
| Jean-Paul Sartre and Music | 23 |
| Sartre and Literature | 27 |
| Sartre’s Existential Philosophy | 28 |
| Sartre’s Novels, Plays, Short Stories | 29 |
| Sartre, Existentialism and Education | 31 |
| Existentialism and Music Education..... | 33 |
| Philosophical Methods as Applied to Writing About Music | 33 |
| Dissertations Applying Psychology to Piano Teaching | 34 |
| Dissertations Applying Philosophy and Existentialism To Keyboard Teaching or General Education | 44 |
| Implications for the Present Study | 51 |
| 3 METHODOLOGY | 52 |
| Search Methodology | 53 |
| Analysis of Sources Found | 54 |
| Synthesis: An Application of Existential Philosophy to Piano Teaching..... | 54 |
| 4 SARTRE’S EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY | 56 |
| Freedom | 56 |
| Facticity..... | 59 |
| Existential Lack | 63 |
| Abandonment..... | 63 |
| Anguish | 65 |
| Bad Faith | 66 |
| The Other, the Look, Concrete Relations with Others | 68 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Love, Masochism, and Sadism | 69 |
| Others, the Third and the Dead | 72 |
| Responsibility | 73 |
| Conclusion | 75 |
| 5 SETTING THE STAGE: WHAT IS PERFORMANCE? | 76 |
| Sartre’s Philosophy of “Committed Art” and Engagement Applied Music | 76 |
| Responsibility | 89 |
| Abandonment - Stage Fright..... | 98 |
| Conclusion | 102 |
| 6 PIANO TEACHERS IN A HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SETTING | 103 |
| Piano Teacher as Advisor and Mentor: Love and Responsibility..... | 103 |
| Teacher as Judge: Responsibility, Existential Lack, and Freedom..... | 109 |
| Sadism and Masochism..... | 114 |
| Freedom | 118 |
| Method – Bad Faith | 122 |
| Teacher as Performer: Responsibility and Abandonment | 125 |
| Conclusion | 127 |
| 7 THE PIANO STUDENT IN A COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT..... | 130 |
| The Student as Freedom..... | 130 |
| Freedom and Bad Faith..... | 132 |
| 1. Choice in Artistic Activities..... | 132 |
| 2. Choice in Career Path | 134 |
| 3. Overuse Injury | 136 |
| Existential Lack and Despair | 138 |
| Anguish | 140 |
| Responsibility | 143 |
| Abandonment | 145 |
| Conclusion | 149 |
| 8 CONCLUSION..... | 150 |
| Existential Piano Teacher | 150 |
| Sartre’s View of Human Freedom | 151 |
| Performance | 152 |
| The Teacher | 152 |
| The Student..... | 153 |
| Interaction Between the Four Elements..... | 154 |
| Implications for Further Study..... | 155 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 156 |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a conversation with students at the Moscow Conservatory, Arthur Schnabel once said “for a man who was fated to become an artist... when he reaches the age of fifteen to seventeen, he will acquire his own habits, his own technique, he will go his own way which is the way of the true artist.”¹ When students decide to enter into a higher education institution and make a commitment to become piano majors, their level of maturity reaches a certain crossroads, both as human beings and as pianists.² The path they choose as they major in music is one filled with artistic decisions in relation to their pieces, as well as in relation to their teacher.

The training of a piano performance major prepares a student to become an artist on stage on one hand, while at the same time places the pupil at the care of a teacher. The set of skills learned during one’s college years are a necessity to help actualize the complete musician in a student, to help him or her prepare for the professional life.³ While studying the piano, the pupil’s goal should be to become an artist, and to stop being a student,⁴ to reach a level of independence no longer requiring the teacher.⁵

¹ Heinrich Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, trans. K.A. Leibovitch (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 178.

² Marianne Uszler, Stewart Gordon, and Elyse Mach, *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1991), 254.

³ Uszler, 255.

⁴ Boris Berman, *Notes From The Pianist’s Bench* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 200.

⁵ Uszler, 53.

When a teacher and student are alone in the room during a lesson, they are facing each other's freedom and an exposed form of communication, their dedication to music.⁶ The quest for art, the trust, friendship, and respect can make the piano lesson one of the most intimate and fulfilling human experiences for both individuals.⁷ The relationship of pupil and teacher requires the understanding of each other's freedom, responsibility, and *abandonment*. This is a prerequisite for both parties in order for their interaction and their artistic contributions to the world of music to be unique and fruitful.

Need for Study

Although there is much literature on piano pedagogy, few studies actually apply specifically to college piano performance majors. Existing studies show that teachers do not have a method or a specific approach addressing the relationship between instructor and student. Great teachers and pianists of the past shared their years of teaching wisdom with us, but they spent little time addressing their personal interaction with students. The literature usually speaks of content in teaching and mentions the personal relationship between student and teacher only in passing, instead of as the subject of the writing. Teachers do not usually address the topics of how they actually treat pupils or relate to them.⁸

⁶ Neuhaus, 177.

⁷ Neuhaus, 203.

⁸ Christine Anne Brown, "A humane approach to private piano instruction: An analysis and application of the ideas of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Jerome Bruner"(D.M.E. diss., Indiana

The writings of college piano teachers on the college level are based on personal actions and observations. Teachers write about their personal experiences, and there is no specific school of thought to unite them into a scholarly body. While advice of teachers from the past can certainly benefit future professors and students, the literature would be more accessible if the thoughts about the student-teacher relationship were organized into a philosophy.

The creation of such an organized philosophy is important. In order for the student to accept anything the teacher suggests, the student must first accept and respect the teacher. From that initial trust, all other interactions of student and teacher follow. If the trust itself is absent, the student may never really listen to the teacher, and the teacher may feel ignored. Therefore, it seems that a study should be conducted into the nature of the relationship of the teacher to the student, and the philosophy behind such a relationship.

In order to describe the relationship between student and teacher, it is important to establish who both individuals are as human beings and as performers. In other words, in order to speak about any roles people play, one needs to describe what it means to be a person. The school of thought chosen to direct the study in this essay is the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's existentialism not only describes the idea of being human, but also advocates the idea of choice, which is important in music both in terms of interpretative and performing decisions. Existentialism also deals with the idea of responsibility, which is important in piano teaching - the responsibility to future generations of musicians, as well as the responsibility to one's teachers, the composer,

and audience in performance. Sartre's idea of *abandonment* perfectly describes the performance situation pianists find themselves in upon entering the concert stage – alone, with many choices to make. Sartre's existentialism also describes the idea of existential psychoanalysis, an idea which the present study relates to describing musical performance in Chapter V, which will also feature an application of Sartre's writings about art as engagement to the idea of performance. The next section briefly introduces an overview of Sartre's existential philosophy, and it is discussed in greater depth in Chapter IV.

Overview of Sartre's Existential Philosophy

Sartre, in "Existentialism is Humanism," declared that "man is condemned to be free."⁹ Existentialists believe that "*existence* comes before *essence*"¹⁰ *Existence* is being in the world. *Essence* is the idea of possessing a specific human nature. "Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards."¹¹ He did not "create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does."¹² Man did not choose to come here, he is here, and whatever happens after his arrival, is the existential concern.

⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is Humanism," trans. Philip Mairet, *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman (Meridian Publishing Company, 1989), 353.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 348.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 349.

¹² *Ibid.*, 353.

A person is a being whose consciousness is directed to the world; however there is always a gap between the world and consciousness, *nothingness*. We, as conscious beings, bring *nothingness* into the world because we can imagine situations which are not present, but absent. This means, we can imagine situations not of the world of being, but of non-being, or of *nothingness*. Therefore, due to this space between the actual world and our consciousness, we can never be what we are. We are always what we are in the mode of not being it. This creates a certain kind of a freedom – freedom from being confined into one role, or mode of being. Man cannot be objectified. There is no human nature.¹³ There is no *essence*. Man is freedom by definition, and he always has a choice. One may choose to follow a course of action, or ignore the possibility, but that is also a decision. A person is responsible for any choice he or she makes. This concept is explained in greater detail in Chapter IV.

Man is only what he wills to be, what he makes of himself.¹⁴ Existentialism puts man in possession of himself and makes him responsible for what he is. Since the action of a single man sets a framework for the actions of all others in the world, in choosing for himself, man chooses for all men.¹⁵ By making a particular choice a person asserts the decision is right, therefore, supporting the idea of others practicing the same choice. The freedom of self, the willing of freedom, depends “entirely on the freedom of others.”¹⁶

¹³ Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” 349.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 349.

¹⁵ Sartre, 350.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 366.

Therefore, in order to will our own freedom, we must will that others be free as well. A person is responsible not only for the self but for all human beings.¹⁷

Sartre's existential description of man also applies to the idea of piano education. In the *existence* before *essence* is the new student: the pupil comes to the first lesson, what happens later is in the student's hands and in the power of the teacher's guidance. A new student should be viewed as an open door of possibilities. A new student is always a blank slate. There is no predetermined piano nature, disposition, or inclination. There are no emotional or mental states which determine, prior to the first lesson, if the person is going to be a pianist. Of course, there can be physical abilities or disabilities, but existentialists believe one can always make something out of what the person has been given. There are many examples of blind or even deaf musicians. No student can be doomed to failure or automatically labeled a success.

Not only are existential teachers faced with their freedom, with the choices they are forced to make everyday, but they are teaching other people who also are cast into the world with freedom to make choices. Existential teachers are responsible for each decision they make in their teaching. They believe their decision influences others in the direct dialogue between them and the student in their studio, as well as in the larger world of education. Any method they choose can be adopted by other teachers, and anything they tell their students will affect the students' understanding of the world.

The existential piano teacher must regard the student as having freedom. The teacher cannot force opinions on the pupil because the student must choose to accept them: otherwise it is not a choice, but a submission, a violation of freedom. The teacher cannot try to define a student by how the teacher views him or her – that is also a

¹⁷ Ibid., 350.

violation of freedom, and that view attempts to assign a nature to a person, which also goes against existential beliefs. A teacher must also not force the student to be what the teacher wishes the pupil to be, because that means defining a person negatively, by what one is not.¹⁸

As Sartre writes, in “fashioning myself I fashion man,” so does the existential piano teacher fashion students by personal actions.¹⁹ A piano professor sets a living example to the student of what a teacher or a pianist should be. A teacher or any person is nothing but the combination of actions.²⁰ The actions of a teacher, as a sample to the student, can bring about humanism. Through reaching beyond the self, a person can feel inner humanity. When a teacher realizes that nothing can “save him from himself” he begins to truly take charge of his life, and will inspire the students to do the same.²¹

Sartre believes human beings experience various states: *anguish*, *abandonment*, and *despair*. *Anguish* is the distress one feels when facing an awareness of freedom. In *anguish*, a person realizes that nothing prevents him or her from doing what he or she chooses to do. Even if external forces prevent the task from being carried out, the person always has the freedom to attempt the action. Nothing prevents a person from attempting to exercise his or her own choice.

Anguish also comes from the fact that man, or specifically the piano teacher, while exercising freedom, if he commits to any state of self, or method of teaching, decides, or sets an example for all of mankind, and more locally, for the lives and

¹⁸ Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” 349.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 350.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 358.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 369.

thoughts of the students. The realization of the weight of all decisions brings about a sense of “complete and profound responsibility,” which is *anguish*.²² A teacher has complete responsibility for the pupils, a large burden to bear. In lessons, the responsible teacher becomes the student’s colleague who shares years of knowledge and experience with someone who has spent less time in the field.²³ Someday, the pupil will also teach, and the current teacher is responsible for these future students as well.²⁴

Abandonment comes from the fact that man is alone. He cannot “depend on anyone upon either within or outside himself.” There are no excuses.²⁵ Man is “condemned at every instant to invent man.”²⁶ Students cannot blame outside conditions for their playing, performing, progress, or practicing. They are by themselves on stage or in a practice room. Even their teacher cannot save them from themselves.

In teaching, one must be ready to accept that reality: piano teachers should prepare their students for performing. Performing is a practice in itself. Most people think if they can play something perfect in a practice room, they are ready for the stage. In a practice room pianists have the comfort of the score, the metronome, and of knowing that mistakes can be ignored, fixed, and time can be stopped, turned back, or fast forwarded (e.g. a certain passage can be repeated, or avoided). When they are on stage, especially as solo pianists, they are alone, *abandoned* in real time. Therefore, it is very important to have students practice performing, by playing for each other, in a studio

²² Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” 351.

²³ Neuhaus, 177.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

²⁵ Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” 353.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 354.

class before they go on stage. They can learn both from the feeling of nervousness, as well as from the teacher's comments regarding other pupils' playing.²⁷

The teacher must encourage the student to be autonomous in a performance, as opposed to relying on the teacher to constantly give suggestions. Performers need to have confidence and conviction in piano playing, a skill which should be stressed early in the learning process.²⁸ Also, the more of a performing artist the pupil becomes, the more the student trusts and respects a teacher who is also a performer.²⁹ The teacher can be a "living example" of *abandonment*.³⁰ Teachers who are performers themselves understand the apprehension of *abandonment* on stage and can better relate to their students' stage fright and other performance anxiety issues.

Another part of *abandonment* is the fact that students sometimes rely on teachers to tell them what to do, as opposed to guiding them, and letting them aid in the discovery process. Some students want the teacher to "mold them," like a "piece of clay."³¹ This approach disrespects their freedom. The mature student would take the teacher's advice, analyze, and translate it into music, making the music still retain the pupil's original personality rather than performing while "armed with a thick mental log of notes containing faithfully memorized directives from the teacher."³²

²⁷ Neuhaus, 199.

²⁸ Berman, 207.

²⁹ Neuhaus, 184.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

³¹ Berman, 200.

³² *Ibid.*, 200.

Some professors have their students do exactly what they tell them, sometimes making exact copies of how they do things. “An attempt to make a talented pupil produce a carbon copy of what the teacher thinks and does is worthy of neither of them.”³³ The approach not only makes the future of the student, who will eventually be left alone without a teacher, empty and uncertain; it also suppresses the student’s creativity and individuality by allowing the student to become a clone of the teacher. The teacher’s goal should be to allow students to find their own voice so that people could not tell that the students are from the same teacher’s piano studio due to the individuality and uniqueness of their playing.³⁴

A teacher must think about the future when the student no longer studies with him or her and must endow the student with the ability to think, not pollute the pupil’s mind with the direct ideas of what to think. One of the main “tasks of a teacher is to ensure as quickly and as thoroughly as possible that he is no longer necessary to the pupil...to inculcate in the pupil that independent thinking, that method of work, that knowledge of self and ability to reach this goal which we term maturity, the threshold beyond which begins mastery.”³⁵

Even though the student and teacher have a relationship, at the core, they are both *abandoned*. They are alone. They must help each other to realize that, and see the infinite possibilities that arise from such a view.

³³ Neuhaus, 179.

³⁴ Berman, 198.

³⁵ Neuhaus, 172.

The last condition is *despair*. *Despair* means that the teacher should accept the student's present condition or abilities, as opposed to having preconceived expectations of success or failure. It means focusing on the possibilities available to the student, as opposed to setting up unattainable goals and losing the present moment in the strife toward the future. *Despair* means the teacher and the student should "act without hope," limiting themselves to the "possibilities within" their "wills."³⁶ "Reality alone is reliable," while dreams and hopes define a person "negatively."³⁷

When preparing for a competition, for example, practicing becomes mechanical, playing becomes predictable. Everything is calculated as a math formula. The student is made into a machine. A teacher must avoid such conditions, and accept the present state of the student, and encourage the student to also accept the state, meaning that the teacher should not attempt to create a future, unrealizable being out of the student. "The teacher's contribution in giving students lasting musical and pianistic guidance is far more important than helping them to... win a competition."³⁸ Teachers should allow their students to face themselves and use their capabilities and gifts to develop, as opposed to concentrating on what they are not, lowering not only their self-esteem but also their potential for increasing freedom from insecurity in the music world. In other words, instead of always assessing their students in terms of what they are not, the teacher should realize that the student, as a human being, is always in the process of not being

³⁶ Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," 357.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 359.

³⁸ Berman, 210.

what they are, and instead of always drawing on their *existential lack*, the students need to have room to develop, grow and create themselves.

Students often feel a sense of “entrapment” in their careers, as well as in their interactions with their teacher.³⁹ They feel forced into playing out a certain role of the teacher’s expectation. The students often find themselves living out a negative or positive “self-fulfilling prophecy,” which is what Sartre’s idea of *despair* aims to challenge.⁴⁰

The most important existential pedagogical idea is “never take man as the end, since man is still to be determined.”⁴¹ Teachers must never lose confidence or faith in their students. Their students are created each and every day by their choices and actions, as well as the actions of the teachers. A student should never be defined.

Although there have been works which have applied existentialism to education, the education spoken of, for the most part, has not been musical. The few musical applications of existentialism did not sufficiently cover Sartre’s philosophy. Those studies mostly performed an analysis and application of various philosophies, not focusing specifically on Sartre. This study takes the idea of Sartre’s existentialism as a pedagogical idea, and applies it as a practical philosophy for piano teachers and their college students who are performers.

³⁹ Seymour B. Sarason, *Teaching As A Performing Art* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 138.

⁴⁰ Sarason, 159.

⁴¹ Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” 368.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this essay is to use existential ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre to provide a philosophy of college piano performance teaching which includes awareness of freedom, *abandonment* and responsibility as a prerequisite for student and teacher interaction. While there are not many sources thoroughly linking existentialism exclusively to piano teaching, it is necessary to explore how existentialism is applied to music education as well as education in general.

Research Questions

The specific research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

- 1) What scholarly works have been published describing the pattern of the teacher/student relationship historically, with specific examples of past pedagogues or pianists?
- 2) How have existential ideas been applied to education in general?
- 3) How can specific existential writings be practically applied to piano teaching?
- 4) How have other people used philosophy to organize applied music teaching methods?

Delimitations

Since there are many existential authors, and some of their ideas differ, the existential philosophical writings used in the essay will be limited to works by Jean-Paul Sartre to eliminate gross generalizations and to specifically focus on his unique ideas of freedom, responsibility, and *abandonment*. This study also uses Sartre's writings about literature and art and applies them to musical performance. Therefore, having the same author as the reference point for ideas of both teaching and aesthetics provides a sense of cohesion for the project.

The study focuses only on the philosophical aspect of the college student/teacher relationship. Ways to solve specific technical or musical issues are used only as example to support the description of the relationship. The content, the specific problems a student may have while learning a piece, is not the goal of the essay.

This study only focuses on the experiences of the piano performance major and professor at a college or a university, not a conservatory. Since the two different institutions have different goals and different approaches toward the attainment of those goals, as well as different academic requirements, the author choose the college setting so as to have one specific environment in which the student and teacher interact. This essay discusses the ideas of performance in the college setting to illustrate how they affect the teacher and student relationship.

The literature written by college piano teachers was selected based on one main criteria: teachers who have at some point in their life maintained vivid performance careers. The author chose to concentrate on works of specific pianists and pedagogues due to her personal experience with them, gained either through personal interaction (i.e. piano lessons), or through the second source interaction of her teachers.

Definitions – Sartre’s Special Terminology

Abandonment is the realization of being alone in the world.

Anguish is the realization of one’s freedom and the responsibility which it carries.

Bad Faith is lying to oneself, either trying to hide from freedom, or from one’s *facticity*.

Being-for-others is the being one has for another person (e.g. being “ashamed” means being ashamed in front of others).

Choice is the decision one makes as a result of exercising one’s freedom.

Despair is focusing on the reality of the moment, not hoping for an unattainable end.

Essence is a being’s nature.

Existence is being present in the world.

Existential Lack is human awareness that something is missing from any given situation or that something could be different.

Facticity is the person’s physical, emotional, and cognitive presence to the world, interpreted by consciousness. It is one’s particular situation in the world: body, social status, gender, race, etc.

Freedom is the realization of a gap between consciousness and the world. This gap creates a distance, which causes the person to always not be what he or she is. As a result, the person is free from any possibility of objectification and possesses the autonomy of choice. To be free means to be able to choose oneself and one's courses of action.

Human being is a being who is free through consciousness but lives in *facticity* (in the mode of not being it).

The Look is involved in relations with other people. The *look* involves the person believing that the other is objectifying him or her. The *look* is the person apprehending him or herself as the object for the other, who is the subject. The other may not, in fact, be doing this, but in the apprehension of the *look*, the person believes that he or she is.

Nihilation is the production of *nothingness*.

Nothingness is the non-being which is brought to the world through human consciousness.

Responsibility is the realization that one is condemned to freedom, cannot hide from freedom, and in every decision sets an example for the rest of mankind in performing a specific action.

The Third is the person *looking* at two or more people, objectifying them as one entity.

Us-Object is the two or more people realizing that the third is *looking* at them and, possibly, objectifying them together as a single entity (e.g. the piano students).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The author reviewed literature by famous piano teachers and the existential ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre in order to synthesize the two in the proposed study. This essay researched Sartre's personal relationship to the field of music and music philosophy, as well as Sartre's ideas about the art of literature. The author also researched the topics of teaching as an art, as well as of interpretation in performance. She also investigated methods of applying philosophical and psychological theories to piano teaching. This study particularly analyzed existential ideas as they were applied to piano teaching, music education, or general education.

Interpretation in Performance

Morris Grossman, in his essay, "Performance and Obligation," discusses the idea of the importance of the performers' freedom in interpretation, as well as the responsibility to the composer's composition.⁴² The author of the present essay applied the idea of performance obligation both to composer and performer's choice and how it must play a role in piano teaching.

Marissa Silverman, in her dissertation, "How a Performer Makes Meaning in Music: An Analysis Selected Interpretations by Pianist Gregory Haimovsky, Applying Louise M. Rosenblatt's Reader Response Theory," explored the difference between text

⁴² Morris Grossman, "Performance and Obligation," *What is Music, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music*, ed. Philip Alperson (University Park: Haven's Publications, Inc., 1997), 273.

and poetry and applied the same ideas to the difference between the composition and the actual experienced performance.⁴³ The author considered these ideas of interpretation in their relation to the concept of piano performance, specifically in relationship to the freedom performers must exercise in order to interpret the composer's work, and the teaching implications which follow.

Teaching Philosophy

In his book, *Teaching as a Performing Art*, Sarason describes what teachers can learn from performing artists. Sarason writes that performers are concerned with “moving,”⁴⁴ or engaging their audiences. Teachers can apply the same idea to engage their students in a classroom. The author used this book to apply this concept to piano teaching. The more a teacher can engage and inspire a piano student to be a performer, the more likely the student will be able to receive an audience response when performing on stage.

Max Van Manen, in his book, *The Tact of Teaching*, describes the role tact plays in the interaction between teachers and students primarily in the classroom setting. He also addresses the fact that the original meaning of “pedagogy” entailed guiding a student on a path to knowledge.⁴⁵ The writer of the present essay used these ideas in Chapter VI to describe the interaction between the student and teacher.

⁴³ Marissa Silverman, “How a Performer Makes Meaning in Music: An Analysis Selected Interpretations by Pianist Gregory Haimovsky, Applying Louise M. Rosenblatt's Reader Response Theory,” (Phd diss., New York University, 2004), 11.

⁴⁴ Seymour B. Sarason, *Teaching As A Performing Art* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 13.

⁴⁵ Max van Manen, *The Tact of Teaching* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 38.

Maxine Greene is a philosopher of education who uses existentialism as a teaching philosophy, fostering freedom between the teacher and student, and presenting the teacher as someone with a fresh point of view on society.⁴⁶ The present essay used several of Greene's books to support the idea of freedom in art, as well as in the interaction between student and teacher.

Music Education Philosophy

Estelle Jorgensen, in her book *The Art of Teaching Music*, reflects on the main aspects of music teaching which she has acquired through scholarship and personal experience.⁴⁷ She addresses ideas such as responsibility to students, different approaches to teaching practice, and the teachers' roles in various aspects of academic life. She speaks about the approach to student-teacher interaction based on respect and trust, about the evaluation of student work, and the importance of choice on the part of student. Jorgensen also describes similarities between teaching the art of music and the concept of art itself.⁴⁸ The author used Jorgensen's work to support the ideas involved in the student and teacher relationship.

David Elliott, in *Music Matters*, described music as an activity, as something which happens in action.⁴⁹ The present paper used Elliott's ideas in Chapter V to

⁴⁶ Maxine Greene, *Teacher as Stranger* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1973), 267.

⁴⁷ Estelle Jorgensen, *The Art of Teaching Music* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁴⁹ David Elliott, *Music Matters*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 39.

establish music as a performing art and to illuminate the importance of the performer in transmitting the composer's message to the audience member.

Music Philosophy

Susanne Langer describes music as a symbol without a specific reference point, or the "unconsummated symbol."⁵⁰ The writer of the present essay used Langer's idea to argue against Sartre's view that music is a non-signifying art. The argument was used in Chapter V to create a philosophical view of music performance.

Piano Teaching Philosophy

Heinrich Neuhaus, in his book, *The Art of Piano Playing*, has a chapter on the "Teacher and Pupil."⁵¹ While the rest of the book focuses on specific technical and musical aspects of playing and performing, this chapter focuses on the student-teacher interaction. The chapter stresses the importance of independence and responsibility of the student and the importance of teaching music as an art form versus simply the skill of piano playing. Neuhaus sees the student-teacher relationship as one of colleagues with closeness and respect.

Boris Berman, in his book, *Notes From The Pianist's Bench*,⁵² has a point of view very similar to Neuhaus. In his chapter on the student-teacher relationship, "The Art of Teaching and The Art of Learning," Berman reiterates the point Neuhaus makes of

⁵⁰ Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 240.

⁵¹ Heinrich Neuhaus., *The Art of Piano Playing*, trans. K.A. Leibovitch (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973).

⁵² Boris Berman, *Notes From The Pianist's Bench* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

student independence, of striving to achieve a goal of being a professional artist as opposed to constantly reaffirming oneself as a student.⁵³ He also writes of the student being independent and assertive in performance because one day the teacher will not be there to help and guide. Similar to Neuhaus, Berman also speaks of the homage to the music, as well as to the student, of taking part in making art as opposed to “spoon-feeding... a mental log of notes.”⁵⁴

Seymour Bernstein’s book, *Monsters and Angels – Surviving a Career in Music*, is a personal account of his life and career. The work demonstrates piano teacher and student interaction through examples of Bernstein’s encounters with famous musicians and teachers throughout his life and stories of himself as a teacher/mentor to many students. Bernstein stresses the idea that “survival” in a music career is dependent upon recognizing the difference between “monster” teachers and “angels.”⁵⁵

Berman, Bernstein, and Neuhaus stress independence, respect, and responsibility of teacher to the student and to music. They also point out that students must be prepared and endowed with skills, knowledge, and confidence for the future when they are left alone on stage, as well as to teach their future pupils.

Uszler, Gordon, and Mach’s book, *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher*, includes several chapters which discuss various aspects of the college level piano studies, as well the relationship between students and professors. They accentuate the idea of

⁵³ Berman., 200.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 200.

⁵⁵ Seymour Bernstein, *Monsters and Angels – Surviving a Career in Music* (Wisconsin: Hal Leonard, 2002), xv.

student independence, of different motivational techniques, and the demands of a musical career.⁵⁶

The author of this essay translated the concepts described by the above-mentioned piano pedagogues into existential terms and created an umbrella philosophy for piano teaching which specifically concentrated on the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre.

Joseph Rezits, in his monograph, *Beloved Tyranna: The Legend and Legacy of Isabelle Vengerova*,⁵⁷ provides a reflection on the teaching style of Isabelle Vengerova as remembered by her former students and people with whom she came into close personal contact. This book describes her tyrannical nature and the fear that she installed on many of her students during their lessons. The monograph focuses on the relationship between teacher and student and the negative effect that relationship can have on one's overall musical and personal development. This book serves as a strong example of a teacher who does not allow her students freedom, a direct opposite of the teaching philosophy which existentialism offers. The author of this essay used Rezits' book as an example of an opposing point of view, of a teacher who did not believe in choice and freedom for her students.⁵⁸

Estelle Jorgensen wrote about a study conducted using private piano teachers, "Aspects of Private Piano Teacher Decision-Making in London, England." The study, amongst other things, discovered that the teaching curriculum was usually catered toward the individual students and the teachers chose repertoire that the students enjoyed because

⁵⁶ Marianne Uszler, Stewart Gordon, and Elyse Mach. *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1991), 254.

⁵⁷ Joseph Rezits, *Beloved Tyranna: The Legend and Legacy of Isabelle Vengerova* (Bloomington, Indiana: David Daniel Music Publications, 1995).

⁵⁸ Rezits, 10.

they knew it would be a great source of practice motivation.⁵⁹ When asked about the solutions to lack of student motivation, teachers resorted to preparing the students for various challenging performance opportunities in hopes that they would practice harder due to the pressure to perform well, as well as giving the students “pep talks.”⁶⁰ However, when the study inquired about the conflicts between student and teacher, it was found, on one instance, that when a teacher asked the student directly what issue the pupil was having, the problem turned out to be a matter of the lesson time and it was changed, with the teacher-pupil relationship improved.⁶¹ It seems that many teachers do not automatically revert to addressing the students and asking them why they are having problems. The lack of such actions seems to exhibit a lack of respect for the student as a free individual able to justify personal decisions. The author of this study investigated similar studies which showed how student choice served as a motivating factor in student learning.

Jean-Paul Sartre and Music

In an interview with Michel Contat, “Self-Portrait at Seventy,” Sartre briefly speaks about the important role music had played for him. He grew up in a musical family, and he played the piano from the age of nine. He even taught piano when he was

⁵⁹ Estelle R. Jorgensen, “Aspects of Private Piano Teacher Decision Making in London, England,” *Psychology of Music* 14, no. 2 (1986): 122.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

twenty-two years old at the L'Ecole normale.⁶² Sartre said in the interview that music occupied four hours of his day,⁶³ and that he would spend two hours at the piano, playing a prelude and fugue by J.S. Bach or a Beethoven sonata.⁶⁴ Later in the interview, Sartre acknowledges he had not written about music because he did not have any original view points on the topic, but he mentions the preface he wrote to Rene Leibowitz's book, *The Artist and His Conscience*. He says he was addressing "the problem of meaning in music" more than music itself.⁶⁵

The preface which Sartre wrote is a part of a book which includes gathered together under the title *The Artist and His Conscience*. The articles were written in response to one of Leibowitz's former students, Serge Nigg.⁶⁶

The preface explores Sartre's views on significance and meaning in music and the difference between the two terms. Sartre also focuses the essay on the idea of music as it relates to bringing freedom and how it can transform the world. Sartre believes classical music attracts an elite audience due to its presence in the concert hall, as opposed to a more intimate setting.⁶⁷ Another aspect of the preface which gets debated by authors responding to Sartre is an idea of "committed art," which means having a

⁶² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Life/Situations*, trans. Paul Auster and Lydia Davis (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 37.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁵ Sartre, *Life/Situations*, 40.

⁶⁶ Mark Carroll, "Commitment or Abrogation? Avant-Garde Music and Jean-Paul Sartre's Idea of Committed Art," *Music and Letters* 83, no.4 (November 2002): 593.

⁶⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations*, trans. Benita Eisler (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1965), 212.

“committed artist:” an “individual who, in the exercise of his own freedom, addressed the lack of freedom in others.”⁶⁸

Mark Carroll wrote two articles which respond to Sartre’s preface. One of them, “Commitment of Abrogation? Avant-Garde Music and Jean-Paul Sartre’s Idea of Committed Art,” addresses Sartre’s hope that one day a “possible artist will emerge,” endow music with freedom, and make it into a “committed art.” Carroll picks Boulez’s *Structures Ia*, and after describing its history attempts to show how it might fit Sartre’s description of the requirements for committed art.⁶⁹

Mark Carroll’s second article, “Jean-Paul Sartre, Rene Leibowitz, and the Musician’s Conscience,” follows the first article with the same general description of the Sartrean preface and the events leading up to the work and surrounding it. He also addresses the fact that Sartre’s call for an artist emerging and changing our world, and Sartre’s “idea of commitment in art” did not “lead us to an egalitarian utopia.” Carroll believes that although music has not lead to freedom, the “overthrow of the bourgeois,” it did succeed in being resistant to the “appropriation by those who in the name of Cold War ideology tried to divide what passed for the civilized world between them.”⁷⁰

The concept of the class difference between the audience members, who are from the “privileged” classes, and the working class who needs the freedom a committed art would offer, is something which plays an important role in Sartre’s preface to *The*

⁶⁸ Carroll, 594.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 601.

⁷⁰ Mark Carroll, “Jean-Paul Sartre, Rene Leibowitz, and the Musician’s Conscience,” *Context* 22 (Spring 2001), 94.

Artist and His Conscience.⁷¹ Class difference is also addressed in the interview with Contat when referring to the audience as having an intimate, *salon*-like listening experience, as opposed to a large concert hall setting where they are more detached from the music.⁷²

Paul E. Robinson's article takes a different look at Sartre's preface. Robinson's "Sartre on Music" attempts to discredit Sartre's line of argument. Through an analysis of several of Sartre's ideas of music's relation to freedom, Robinson claims that Sartre states music should aim to evoke the hope of the oppressed. Robinson tries to discredit this view by saying that music cannot take sides, even if they are "morally and politically justifiable" if it is to remain politically neutral.⁷³

All of the responses to Sartre's preface provide examples of modern compositions of the time, such as Boulez's *Structures Ia* while Sartre's actual preface gives more classical examples of Bach, Scarlatti, Schumann and Ravel.⁷⁴ All the articles speak of the idea of a "committed art" and some mention the idea of significance, but they do not however fully explore Sartre's idea of meaning. Sartre even says in the interview with Contat that the main point in the preface to the *Artist and His Conscience* is really the idea of meaning.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Sartre, *Situations*, 208.

⁷² Sartre, *Life/Situations*, 40.

⁷³ Paul E. Robinson, "Sartre on Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31, no.4 (Summer, 1973):456.

⁷⁴ Sartre, *Situations*, 218.

⁷⁵ Sartre, *Life/Situations*, 40.

The articles do not acknowledge Sartre's participation in music as both a pianist and as a teacher. The articles also do not fully explore Sartre's association of music with the time period in which it was written, the social and cultural implications.

Chapter V of the present study took a fresh look at Sartre's essay preface to the *Artist and His Conscience*, and addressed Sartre's hopeful vision of an artist emerging through the idea of looking at music from a performance, as opposed to a compositional point of view. There is an attempt to show that such an artist, who will be capable of "transforming" our freedom into music, can be a performer. The writer of this doctoral essay used a short article which Sartre wrote about jazz to support the idea of live music moving, affecting, and engaging the audience.⁷⁶

Sartre and Literature

Sartre, in *What is Writing*, reaffirmed his ideas of writing as an engaged and committed art and described how the writer's stance on a topic is inevitable, making writing an action.⁷⁷ The present essay used the ideas in *What is Writing* in Chapter V to support the view of a musical performer as being able to engage in transferring freedom to the audience. While Sartre did not believe that music could signify emotions, the present essay uses the ideas of choice, psychoanalysis, and Susanne Langer to prove it can.

⁷⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Nick's Bar, New York City" in *The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

⁷⁷ Sartre, *What is Writing?* in *Essays in Existentialism* (New York: Citadel Press Book, 1993), 318.

Sartre's Existential Philosophy

Sartre's *Transcendence of the Ego* describes his theory of consciousness and the fact that the human ego is in the world, not in consciousness.⁷⁸ This book was used in the present essay's descriptions of his existential philosophy.

Sartre's *Emotions: Outline of a Theory* describes emotions as a magical behavior of the consciousness when faced with a situation it cannot easily solve and which it aims to deny.⁷⁹ This idea was utilized in the present essay to describe performance anxiety.

In one of his most prominent works, *Being And Nothingness*,⁸⁰ Sartre asks and answers questions about the experience of being human. This monumental work thoroughly describes his philosophy of the nature of consciousness, of existence in the world, of interaction with others, and of the possible psychoanalytical and ethical implications. The philosophy behind this monograph is described in depth in Chapter IV.

In a much shorter work, a lecture, "Existentialism is a Humanism," Sartre explains how three states arise from the basic principle of existentialism, which is the idea that "existence comes before essence."⁸¹ The three states arising from existentialism

⁷⁸ Sartre, *Transcendence of the Ego*, trans. Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 31.

⁷⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory in Essays in Existentialism* (New York: Citadel Press, 1993), 232.

⁸⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956).

⁸¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is Humanism," trans. Philip Mairet, *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman (Meridian Publishing Company, 1989), 348.

are *anguish*, *abandonment*, and *despair*. This present study related each state to piano teaching using similar ideas from the writings of prominent piano pedagogues.

Anguish is the sense of “complete and profound responsibility.”⁸² In this study, the author will relate the idea of anguish to the responsibility the teacher and student have to each other, as well as to the art of music.

Abandonment comes from the fact that man is alone. He cannot “depend on anyone upon either within or outside himself.”⁸³ In this study, *abandonment* was used to refer to a time when the student is left alone either on stage in a solo performance or later on in life when the pupil becomes the teacher of the next generation of pianists.

Despair means the teacher and the student should “act without hope,” limiting themselves to the “possibilities within” their “wills.”⁸⁴ Despair was used in this study to address the problem of defining the student beyond his or her musical present, negatively defining the pupil.

Sartre’s Novels, Plays, Short Stories

Besides writing philosophical works, Sartre also wrote novels, short stories, and plays. The present study will use Sartre’s literature works to support his philosophical ideas. Sartre’s famous novel, *Nausea*, published prior to *Being and Nothingness* illustrates the idea of *existence*, of man’s *facticity*. The main character, Roquentin, realizes his *existence*, as well as the existence of all of the objects in the world. He feels

⁸² Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” 351.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 353.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 357.

existence suffocating and penetrating him, and hence experiences the “nausea.”⁸⁵ Sartre was quoted as saying that *Nausea* was his best work.⁸⁶ It will be used in the present essay to demonstrate the idea of *facticity*, or man’s presence in the world.

Sartre’s plays *No Exit* and *The Flies*, published at about the same time as *Being and Nothingness*, are used in this essay to concretely illustrate ideas of freedom, *abandonment*, and responsibility.

No Exit is a portrayal of three characters who are condemned to hell, which is a room they all share with no mirrors. They become each other’s mirrors. The characters slowly realize that although, they were expecting to experience various tortures, the greatest torture was themselves and their interaction with each other, leading one of them to exclaim that “hell is other people.”⁸⁷ The play supports Sartre’s idea of man being condemned to freedom and making choices, and of the idea of *being-for-others*.

The Flies is a play about Orestes who avenges the death of his father by killing his mother and her husband, who murdered the father. Orestes becomes aware of his freedom, realizes the fact that gods no longer control his fate, and understands the idea of *abandonment* and the responsibility which he must bear for the actions he has taken.⁸⁸ Orestes illustrates the idea of the existential hero.

⁸⁵ Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions Books, 2007), 126.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, vii.

⁸⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit*, in *No Exit and Three Other Plays*, trans. I. Abel (New York, Vintage Books, 1989), 45.

⁸⁸ Sartre, *The Flies*, in *No Exit and Three Other Plays*, (New York, Vintage Book, 1989), 105.

Sartre, Existentialism and Education

A number of books have been written applying existentialism to general education. There are numerous existential thinkers, and their philosophy sometimes differs. The author of this study focused her research on works which specifically reference the existential philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre.

In the book, *Existentialism and Education*, Kneller has a chapter on “The Teacher and Student” in which he emphasizes the importance of teachers being free individuals and through actions showing to their students that they are also free beings with individual personalities who should be treated as such. Referencing Sartre’s idea that man can never be defined, Kneller writes that the “highest educational goal (is) man’s search for himself”⁸⁹ and urges the reader to listen to Sartre and value a person in his or her “uniqueness.”⁹⁰ Kneller provides three goals for an existential teacher: first “the treatment of subject matter,” second, “to discover truth in free association, achievement of... ‘autonomous functioning of mind,’” and last “evidence that his students” believe something is “true because they convinced themselves it is true.”⁹¹

Bedford, in his book, *Existentialism and Creativity*, in a chapter on “The Existentialist Appraisal of the Child and His Education,” states that the teacher must do everything in his or her power for the students.⁹² The teacher is also held accountable for how he or she has chosen to arouse the student’s interest in the subject.⁹³

⁸⁹ George F. Kneller, *Existentialism and Education* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1958), 117.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

As Berman and Neuhaus have mentioned in regards to piano teaching, Bedford writes that the teacher must not allow the students to “surrender” themselves to him or her or to be “molded” by the other students or administration.”⁹⁴ Bedford also writes that the teacher should help the student to be aware of the self as “a being who is always transcending himself”⁹⁵ and not falling prey to definitions or character generalizations of any kind.

Morris, in his book, *Existentialism in Education*, has a chapter on “An Existentialist Pedagogy.” In the chapter he summarizes three aspects of the human condition of which an existential teacher should foster an “awareness.” The “awakening of the student” should involve “choice, freedom, and responsibility.” The teacher plays the part of “evoker” and “awakener” of the artistic expression, he or she must stimulate interest in the pupils by allowing them to see that they are far from the goal, and it is their responsibility to reach it.⁹⁶

All three of the writers on education, Bedford, Kneller, and Morris focus on the three main aspects of existentialism as they are practically applied to teaching: freedom, choice and responsibility. The writers also stress the importance of having both student and teacher experience those three conditions, and respect each other as individuals endowed with freedom.

⁹² Mitchell Bedford, *Existentialism and Creativity* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1972), 225.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁹⁶ Van Cleve Morris, *Existentialism in Education* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), 137- 139.

Existentialism and Music Education

In his article, “Existentialism and Music Education,” Foster applies existential ideas to general music education. He writes about allowing the student to make “authentic choices,”⁹⁷ of treating the pupil as a unique individual, and of helping him or her to desire and bring about personal freedom. Foster warns of the danger of group instruction in overlooking the individual in students, in the teacher becoming a “manipulator” aiming to push students into competitions and “exploiting certain musical talents,” as opposed to concentrating on the pupils as a whole.⁹⁸ Similar to the writers who applied existential theories to general education, Foster’s article also appeals to respect, freedom, choice and responsibility as a necessity in music education.

Philosophical Methods as Applied to Writing About Music

Estelle Jorgensen writes about applying philosophical methods to writing about music education. She addresses both the different methods of philosophical argument and inquiry, as well as how they have been successfully used in the philosophy of music education. The underlying points Jorgensen stresses are clarification of terms,

⁹⁷ Donald L. Foster, “Existentialism and Music Education,” *Music Journal* 29, no.7 (Sept. 1971): 36.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

acknowledgement of assumptions, and the arguments in relation to schools of thought.⁹⁹ She also describes different kinds of questions in philosophy: ontological, epistemological, axiological, ethical, logical, political and aesthetic. As suggested by Jorgensen, the author of this study established clear terms and addressed ontological, ethical, and aesthetic questions in piano performance and pedagogy.

Dissertations Applying Psychology to Piano Teaching

Christine Anne Brown's dissertation, "A Humane Approach to Private Piano Instruction: An Analysis and Application of the Ideas of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Jerome Bruner," describes how the psychological views of these three scholars can be applied to piano teaching. The work uses psychology to create a "humane" or compassionate approach to piano teaching.¹⁰⁰ The dissertation examines and then provides an in depth critique of each person's psychological theory through the analysis of its philosophical, educational, and musical viewpoints, contrasting and comparing it to the viewpoints of others.¹⁰¹

Brown analyzes Maslow's idea of self-actualization and motivation and the belief that the student wants to learn and accept responsibility for the learning process.¹⁰² Of

⁹⁹ Estelle R. Jorgensen, "On Philosophical Method," *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992), 91.

¹⁰⁰ Christine Anne Brown, "A humane approach to private piano instruction: An analysis and application of the ideas of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Jerome Bruner" (D.M.E. diss., Indiana University, 2000), 3.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 69.

particular interest to the present study is that Maslow agrees with the existential idea of individuality and knowledge through experience.¹⁰³

According to Brown, Maslow's theory as applied to education allows the teacher to accept the student as an individual and facilitate the development of the student's potential.¹⁰⁴ Maslow also supports music education because he believes it allows for the "peak experiences," or moments of intense emotions, realizations, and awe.¹⁰⁵

Brown 's humane piano teaching philosophy uses Maslow to allow the teacher to evaluate the student's musical individuality, develop an open communication with the pupil, and foster the his or her own self-assessment. Brown also advocates for the use of Maslow's "rhapsodic communication," of creative language use to illustrate and compare concepts. Finally, Brown stresses the importance of an atmosphere of acceptance and safety, of therapeutic conditions during the piano lesson, and of allowing the studio to "focus upon the expressive behavior of creativity, play and wonder."¹⁰⁶

Carl Rogers agrees with the existential belief that choice is essential in making decisions in education. According to Brown, Roger's theory, as applied to education, calls for the student to choose to learn and not be motivated by external criteria such as grades.¹⁰⁷ Rogers believes that a person cannot teach another person anything of "lasting significance." He thinks that the student has to choose to learn while the instructor

¹⁰³ Brown, 83-84.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 89.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 72.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 115.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, 164.

facilitates the process.¹⁰⁸ Brown also writes that Rogers believes in the teacher's acceptance and "empathetic understanding" of the student, in the pupil and teacher sharing responsibility for the learning process, and in the collaborative, as opposed to "didactic" teaching approach.¹⁰⁹ The instructor does not attempt to mold, but rather accepts the student. The student, in turn, feels free to be sincere with the instructor.¹¹⁰ Even if negative criticism is necessary, both parties have established a means to an open communication and resolution of the problem.¹¹¹

According to Brown, Jerome Bruner sees instruction as means of passing down culture.¹¹² Brown applies Bruner's theory of a cultural, dialogic approach, by suggesting for more interaction between students in a piano studio and collaboration with other musicians.

Brown describes the collaborative approach as fostering democracy and illustrates this by an example of an opposing, didactic view by describing how an unnatural posture during piano playing can potentially harm a student's learning process. Brown also stresses student initiative in self-assessment and repertoire choice.

Brown suggests that criticism should be careful not to hurt the pupil's self awareness. She applies Bruner's concept of narrative to the student's projection of his or her future and the implications which follow from the student's negative view of such.

¹⁰⁸ Brown, 163.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 163-166.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 191.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 192.

¹¹² Ibid., 215.

Brown also believes that piano teachers are in a position to foster the students' view of selves as people and as artists.

In order to prepare the student for performance in the intense atmosphere of an audience watching, as well as in the spontaneity of the performance moment, Brown suggests applying the computational approach to piano practice.¹¹³

When summarized, Brown's humane approach involves the teacher-student interaction in an "atmosphere of acceptance, honest communication, trust," as well as a sense of collaboration between the two parties and a "link to the student's overall musical progress, motivation, and well-being."¹¹⁴ Brown's "humane approach" asks for the student's input in his or her studies, as well as works being studied, and addresses the possibility of student's emotional problems which can hinder the lesson. The study also stresses the importance of the teacher being actively involved with the piano in some capacity, such as playing or attending concerts, and the importance of not teaching the same repertoire to students using the same techniques.¹¹⁵ The approach also highlights the importance of the teacher and student having a "partnership" and sharing the responsibility for the student's learning and progress.

The humane approach advocates for the student's development of self-confidence, which may lead to better performance skills.¹¹⁶ Brown's method calls for the teacher to

¹¹³ Brown, 249.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 324.

¹¹⁶ Brown, 325.

establish an educational philosophy, which would help plan the structure of the student's study and lessons.¹¹⁷

The present study considered Brown's dissertation in the planning stages, and connected the psychological ideas of responsibility, choice, freedom, and acceptance to Sartre's ideas of existentialism. The study spent additional time analyzing the practical application of Sartre's philosophical ideas to piano teaching and situations between piano teacher and student. The study also concentrated on the concept of performance and all the implications which follow when one teaches piano performance. Brown's dissertation was used as a blueprint for creating an applied existential piano teaching philosophy.

Charlotte Kroeker's dissertation, "The Application of the Rogerian Theory of Learning to the Teaching of Piano in a Higher Educational Setting," uses the phenomenological theory of learning of Carl Rogers and applies it to piano teaching on the college level.¹¹⁸ Kroeker tests the theory by applying it to teaching eighteen undergraduate college students, both majors and non-majors, at a small liberal arts institution through 30-minute private piano lessons and with a once-a-week piano studio class.¹¹⁹ Results were acquired by having the test subjects fill out an entrance and exit questionnaires, addressing the effect of the approach on their studies and learning, as well as by recording the lessons and having other faculty members evaluate the students' progress.

¹¹⁷Brown, 322.

¹¹⁸ Charlotte Kroeker, "The Application of the Rogerian Theory of Learning to the Teaching of Piano in a Higher Educational Setting" (PhD diss., Kansas State University, 1981), 3.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 51.

The students were made aware of the study by filling out a consent form and by having a syllabus which clearly described the roles of both teacher and student in the Rogerian method of piano studies. The student had the freedom to set and take responsibility for pursuing individual goals, while the teacher facilitated the achievement of those goals through the knowledge of resources.¹²⁰

Kroeker describes Roger's statements about learning as including the fact that a person "cannot teach another person how to teach," and that for learning to happen, it needs to be "self-discovered" and "self-appropriated."¹²¹ According to Kroeker, Rogers suggests creating the atmosphere of freedom in learning, where the student is active and responsible for the learning process, and for dealing with problems which may occur. Since the student is self-motivated in learning, the teacher's role is that of a facilitator, who encourages an atmosphere of trust, sincerity, acceptance, and choice in the classroom, as well as empathy between teacher and student. The theory also places the teacher into the larger community of learning, of parents and other community members who are also responsible for fostering knowledge, and who provide both material and human resources, to further facilitate the learning process.¹²²

The student, in turn, accepts responsibility for the learning process, makes active decisions about the course of the studies, and, as a result, dedicates more of him or herself to the piano lessons. The student and teacher learn from each other, and most importantly, the student acquires not only content but the knowledge of how to learn.¹²³

¹²⁰ Kroeker, 50.

¹²¹ Ibid., 11.

¹²² Ibid., 12-15.

Kroeker believes that when applied to piano teaching, Rogerian ideas involve taking the authoritative role away from the teacher, accepting the student in the current state, and, as a result, helping the student develop confidence. The teacher also empathizes with the student in the area of performance and learning progress, since the teacher at one time also experienced frustrating situations in those areas. The teacher uses all the resources of the learning institution, including performance opportunities, practice spaces, peer support, concert attendance, and material educational resources.¹²⁴

According to Kroeker, in the piano teaching method, the emphasis is for the student to be able to take the learned skills and apply them to future pieces and situations.¹²⁵ The student invests more individuality and responsibility into the work, valuing piano playing and art, and therefore, acquires a stronger connection to pursuing the studies.¹²⁶

In Kroeker's study the effectiveness of the Rogerian teaching method was analyzed using seven different criteria questions. The first one was to determine whether more progress was made by the students than in the traditional piano teaching methods. This was ascertained by having the faculty of Kansas State University listen to recordings of the lessons at the beginning, middle, and end of the study. The study found that the progress was equivalent or better than when using traditional teaching methodologies.¹²⁷

¹²³ Kroeker, 15.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 16-18.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 19.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 20.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 26.

The second area in question was whether or not the course promoted “development of attitudinal attributes.” Based on the student response form, it was determined that students possessed a strong and positive attitude toward musical commitment, development of responsibility, self-expression, self-confidence, and general increase of interest in music (e.g. concert attendance, increase in practice commitments, and dedication to continuing studies).¹²⁸

The third area was the development of musical concepts. The student final response form showed that students felt that they have developed knowledge, skills, and creativity.¹²⁹

The fourth area was whether or not the students felt the Rogerian method provided good learning conditions. The student final response form found that students said they worked harder in the course than in others: “they felt understood by the instructor, the instructor was a real person” and they “felt the freedom to learn.”¹³⁰

The fifth area in question was how the students were affected based on their initial status. While most of the responses did not show an overwhelming change, there was a movement toward more students wanting to continue their piano studies and feeling comfortable about performance.¹³¹ There was a significant increase in the number of students taking responsibility for their own progress.¹³²

¹²⁸ Kroeker, 29.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 28.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 32.

¹³¹ Ibid., 36.

¹³² Ibid., 41.

The sixth area examined if student responses were affected by whether or not the pupils were music majors. While most of the data was statistically non-significant, it was found that both music majors and non-majors felt more understood by the piano teacher after using the Rogerian method.¹³³ The seventh area of the study found that both less and more experienced students responded the same to the Rogerian method.¹³⁴

Kroeker's study also shares some anecdotal observations of students. One student decided to major in music after taking the Rogerian method piano class, one improved musical ability, one learned a significant amount more than in previous piano studies, one acquired a taste for contemporary music, and one was inspired to study piano pedagogy.¹³⁵ There were several negative outcomes: one student did not benefit from self-directing the course of piano study, was not self-motivated enough to practice and make progress, and, in the end, switched majors. One student was frequently absent from lessons, and therefore, did not progress, and questioned the grading criteria of not allowing flexibility for his individual situation. However, the following semester the pupil dedicated more time to the piano, and made progress. Another student was used to having more freedom in interpretation and technical aspects of playing. The teacher used a tape recorder to record the student's playing, and the student was able to self-evaluate. Improvements in playing and student-teacher relationship occurred, and the student was more open to the teacher's suggestions.¹³⁶

¹³³ Kroeker, 41.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 44.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 47.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 44-48.

Overall, Kroker's study demonstrated that, at first, students who were used to more directed approaches of study found it difficult to adjust to the Rogerian method. Since the motivation should have been self-driven, some students procrastinated on practicing and fell prey to not being able to balance other work with their piano studies, letting piano studies have the least priority.¹³⁷

However, the self-driven students excelled and accepted responsibility. They made independent decisions, and discovered and used the best learning strategies for them. The relationships between instructor and student were positive.¹³⁸

The study of the Rogerian method as applied to piano teaching found positive results and improvements in the student areas of musical commitment, self-confidence, personal responsibility, and self-expression.¹³⁹

Kroeker concludes her study by recommending Rogerian method be applied to piano teaching at a higher educational setting. However, she acknowledges the prerequisite of a sufficient musical training for the theory to be successful. She believes the method fosters a good student-teacher relationship, and, since pupils own the responsibility for their own progress, they seem to practice more, and want to continue the study of music and participation in musical activities.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Kroeker, 49.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 29.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 53.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 56.

Kroeker recommends that subsequent studies focus on the area of teaching performance, since the study did not prove successful in this area for the majority of students.¹⁴¹

Since the themes of freedom, choice, and self-motivation are common between Rogerian theory and existentialism, the author of the present study used Kroeker's research to support the idea of existential piano teaching. She further related existential idea of *abandonment* to the area of performance and provided ways which teachers can address this area, which Kroeker's application of the Rogerian method was not successful in achieving.

Dissertations Applying Philosophy and Existentialism To Keyboard Teaching or General Education

Michael James Bauer, in his dissertation, "An Introduction to the Philosophical and Psychological Foundations of Teaching Choral Conducting and Organ," conducts a translation of psychological and philosophical theories into their application in organ playing and choral conducting.¹⁴² By "translation," Bauer means a "creative and speculative enterprise which involves interpretation, extrapolation, analysis, synthesis, application, and evaluation."¹⁴³

Bauer analyzed four philosophical schools of thought: Idealism (Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hegel), Realism (Aristotle, Locke, Adler), Pragmatism (Peirce, James, Dewey),

¹⁴¹ Kroeker, 57.

¹⁴² James Michael Bauer, "An Introduction to the Philosophical and Psychological Foundations of Teaching Choral Conducting and Organ," (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1983), 171.

¹⁴³ Bauer, 172.

and Existentialism (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre).¹⁴⁴ He also described four psychological schools of thought: Functionalism (Dewey, James), Behaviorism (Pavlov, Thorndike, Watson, Skinner), Cognitive-Developmental Psychology (Wertheimer, Lewin, Bruner, Piaget, Ausubel), and Humanism (Maslow, Rogers).¹⁴⁵

During his process of translating the various theories, Bauer remained detached from choosing a particular school of thought as the most appropriate for music pedagogy.¹⁴⁶ However, he does suggest that in the utilization of his study, the teacher should chose from different schools of thought, as well as evaluate the instructor's current personal practices.¹⁴⁷ Bauer classifies this method as being closest to existentialism, placing the importance in pedagogical practice on the idea of teacher's individual preference and choice.¹⁴⁸ Bauer also acknowledges the importance of interpretation as another outcome of the translation approach and that other interpretations of the schools of thought he used are possible.¹⁴⁹

Due to the breadth of the various theories Bauer covers in his dissertation, the author of the present essay will mainly focus on Bauer's analysis and application of existential ideas to music education. However, it is interesting to compare Brown's dissertation about humanism and how she applied the theories of Maslow and Rogers to how Bauer accomplished the same goal. Both Brown and Bauer mention the relationship

¹⁴⁴ Bauer, 12.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 13.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 272.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 273.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 274.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 277.

between humanistic psychology and existentialism. Bauer states, according to Maslow, both existentialism and humanism value freedom, responsibility, individualism, and the value of experience as preceding concepts.¹⁵⁰ One aspect of Bauer's translation of Rogers, not as emphasized by Brown, is the importance of the idea of authenticity, both for student and teacher, which is well suited with Sartrean idea of avoiding roles. Also, the Rogerian idea of teachers as always "becoming," their identity being a work in progress, is also an existential idea.

Bauer defines existential focus as the "individual's encounter with reality." He states that existential thought calls on the person to "realize and authenticate" freedom.¹⁵¹ Bauer then analyzes the ideas of several existential philosophers as they developed through generations of thought. He describes Kierkegaardian idea of despair as being the first condition of man: despair of not wishing to be oneself, despair at not being conscious of self, and finally, despair at willingly being the individual self, and choosing freedom while finding destiny with "fear and trembling."¹⁵²

Bauer then summarizes Nietzsche's idea of being alone in the world and of choice and self-validation in life. Bauer also describes the role of the philosopher as, according to Nietzsche, creating values, determining a path in life or taking charge to lead it in the right direction.¹⁵³

Bauer describes Heidegger's idea of man's consciousness of self-existence, loneliness, and lack of *essence*. When describing Sartre's ideas, Bauer focuses of the

¹⁵⁰ Bauer, 146.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 70.

¹⁵² Ibid., 72.

¹⁵³ Bauer, 72.

difference between the “being-in-itself,” everything in the world except human consciousness, and the “being-for-itself,” human consciousness, the idea of choice and responsibility for self and others, freedom, and of human *nothingness*.¹⁵⁴ Bauer concludes the discussion of existential beliefs by describing the lack of innate human nature, and man’s “alienation” from his fellow men as the conflict between the object-subject relation between them.¹⁵⁵

When applying existentialism to education, Bauer points out that subject matter has value in how it helps the “self-authenticating process” of the student.¹⁵⁶ Bauer believes that the learning process should stress fostering an “individuated personality” and originality, and that the goal of the artistic process is not the finished product, but an interpreted artistic statement.¹⁵⁷

The author of the present doctoral essay used Bauer’s translation of existentialism to support her teaching philosophy throughout, as well as specifically in Chapter VI, which deals with the practical aspects of teaching. Bauer’s application of existentialism to music education involves freedom, choice and responsibility as it relates to making musical and interpretative decisions.¹⁵⁸ Bauer believes the goal of music study is to help the student actualize performance potential with artistic integrity.¹⁵⁹ Bauer acknowledges the importance of creativity, individuality, and authenticity in interpretive decisions, as

¹⁵⁴ Bauer, 75.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

well as the danger of simply and blindly abiding the general standards of the field. He suggests the student, while making artistic decisions, consult and study primary sources in order to take full artistic ownership of translating the written score into a performance.¹⁶⁰

While the author of the present essay disagrees with Bauer's idea of a teacher being a "resource" to the learner, which objectifies the person and is against Sartre's view of human interaction, the author agrees with the role of the teacher as that of a "co-participant" in artistic development. The teacher is not a dictator but rather is available to the student for consultation, should the student choose to ask for help.¹⁶¹

Bauer believes that during the learning process, the student chooses the curriculum, method, interpretation, and decides the evaluation standards.¹⁶² Performance outside of the music school is also given an important role.¹⁶³ The most important idea in applied music education is in order to encourage "authentic" performances the instructor must guard the student from society's attempts to force him or her into traditional "patterns of execution."¹⁶⁴

The author of the present essay disagrees with the idea of an authentic performance. Since interpretation will always make a performance different, there cannot be only one, or authentic, way of portraying a piece which is the most appropriate.

¹⁶⁰ Bauer, 210.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 212.

¹⁶² Ibid., 214.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 216.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 217.

She does, however, use the idea of having a unique performance as a goal of piano teaching throughout her paper.

Sean Blenkinsop, in his dissertation, “Choice, Dialogue, and Freedom: Towards a Philosophy of Education based in Existentialism,” examines the works of three major existential writers: Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, and Jean-Paul Sartre. The work is divided into chapters dedicated to each philosopher and his theories. Each chapter begins with a brief biography of the individual, examines his philosophy, and then relates the findings to education. In the last chapter, Blenkinsop synthesizes and applies the ideas of all three philosophers to create existential teaching guidelines.

The introductory chapter describes the work of four philosophers of education who apply existentialism to teaching (Van Cleve Morris, George Kneller, Maxine Greene, and Frederick Mayer) to establish the background of work already performed in this research area.¹⁶⁵ The author of the present essay also examined the works of these writers.

Blenkinsop examines each person’s application of existentialism to education. He describes the five main themes which appear in each educational philosopher’s work: the individual, choice, situation, the other, and action. Blenkinsop divides the individual section into: the existential moment (the moment of realization of self-existence in the world),¹⁶⁶ the existential project (the individual becoming aware of freedom and making active choices in accordance with this awareness),¹⁶⁷ the individual versus the group,¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Sean Blenkinsop, “Choice, Dialogue and Freedom: Towards a Philosophy of Education based in Existentialism,” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2004), 1.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 15.

appropriation (choosing to learn and apply the knowledge presented),¹⁶⁹ and of transcendence and becoming (of being aware of freedom, and self-actualizing without limitations and definitions).¹⁷⁰

Blenkinsop focuses on Kierkegaard's idea of choice and the individual becoming aware of the crisis of existence. He analyzes Buber's idea of the dialogue and relationship between individuals. In the Sartre chapter, Blenkinsop describes the development of Sartre's philosophy of freedom, as well as the possibility of a group and community.

Blenkinsop describes the major ideas of Sartre's philosophy: division of the world into being-in-itself and the being-for-itself, *existential lack*, Sartre's belief in the lack of cause in the past, and of choice as being a present decision, *facticity*, *bad faith*, *anguish*, value, and lastly of imagination (the human ability to reorganize the past memories, creating a collage).¹⁷¹ The author of the present work also used these Sartrean terms and more thoroughly defined them in Chapter IV of this essay. These terms were also used to describe the relationship of student/teacher.

Blenkinsop also describes the key elements involved in understanding human freedom: society, dialectic, and the third party observer. Blenkinsop then describes various scenarios of the group and community. The author of the present essay used the idea of a group to describe the college community and environment, both from the point of view of the administration and professors, as well as the student's colleagues and friends.

¹⁶⁸ Blenkinsop, 18.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 22.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 189.

Implications for the Present Study

The author interpreted and applied Sartre's existential philosophy to piano teaching. The author also used Sartre's prose as examples in supporting his philosophy.

The ideas gathered from the author's research of existentialism as it is implied to education and to music education were used to provide support for the author's own interpretation and application of Sartre's philosophy to piano teaching and performing.

This study applied the writings of famous piano teachers, and music educators to provide support for the chapters addressing the relationship between teacher and student in a college environment.

Christine Anne Brown's research study was used as a blueprint to follow in conducting and synthesizing the research into a philosophy. The author used the other dissertations listed in this literature review as samples of organizing ideas into sections and also as examples of a practical application of a theory.

The writer of this essay found the other studies lacking in-depth focus on concrete application to the world of piano teaching, and therefore, the author of this study focused on providing real life piano teaching examples to further help illustrate the concepts described.

The author also discovered a lack of studies of the application of psychological and philosophical theories to the idea of piano performance. Therefore, the present study dedicated Chapter V to describing the idea of performance and used Sartre's idea of *abandonment* and *anguish* throughout the entire essay to address the situation the teacher and student encounter during their solo concert appearances.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this essay is to use existential ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre to create a philosophy of college piano performance teaching which includes awareness of freedom, *abandonment* and responsibility as a prerequisite for student and teacher interaction. While there are not many sources thoroughly linking existentialism to piano teaching, it was necessary to explore other sources where existentialism was applied to music education, as well as general education.

The first step of the research included gathering existing sources: finding books, dissertations, and articles which analyze existential ideas as applied to education, music, piano pedagogy, and music education to see what research has already been done. The second step was to re-read Sartre's existential works and see how they relate to the existing application of his philosophy researched in the previous step. The author then investigated what could be added and elaborated specifically regarding the application of Sartre's philosophy to piano teaching on the college level. Outside of strictly philosophical works, Sartre's prose and plays were also examined. In order to analyze the ideas of music and performance, the author also researched Sartre's writing and interviews about music, as well as his writing about literature and language.

The next step was to find existing research containing philosophies of piano teaching by famous piano pedagogues of today as well as the past, general music educators, and famous piano performers. The author examined all of the musical sources and used them to support the philosophy outlined by Sartrean existentialism.

The third and final step in the study was to synthesize ideas from the existential realm with those in piano teaching, to create an existential philosophy of piano teaching for the college professor and student, and to synthesize Sartre's ideas of "engaged writing" with the idea of performance.

The author followed the model of Christine Brown's dissertation, "A Humane Approach to Private Piano Instruction: An Analysis and Application of the Ideas of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Jerome Bruner,"¹⁷² as a blueprint to create the structure of the document.

Search Methodology

The author used internet search engines, as well as the ones of the University of Miami Libraries to find relevant sources on existentialism, existential philosophy as it is applied to education, to music education, and to piano teaching. She also followed the same steps in finding relevant writings by today's college piano teachers as well as historically. A search was conducted for articles, books, and dissertations about the practical application of existentialism, particularly the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre, to teaching.

The study also reviewed books about famous pianists and teachers, as well as studies that were conducted in similar areas: the area of existentialism as it is applied to

¹⁷² Christine Anne Brown, "A Humane Approach to Private Piano Instruction: An Analysis and Application of the Ideas of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Jerome Bruner" (D.M.E. diss., Indiana University, 2000).

education, as well as studies done to analyze ideas in private piano teaching in a higher educational setting applying psychological or philosophical theories.

Analysis of Sources Found

The author analyzed and synthesized the sources found to create a detailed existential philosophy of college piano teaching. She also evaluated existential ideas based on their relevance to piano teaching and drew supporting material from the realm of music teaching. The present study also applied Sartre's ideas about literature to the idea of performance and drew connections between the two art forms. Other studies of practical application of philosophy were used as samples of the organization for the overall document.

Synthesis: An Application of Existential Philosophy to Piano Teaching

The goal of the research was to describe teachers and students with Sartre's view of human beings and the implications which follow: freedom, responsibility and *abandonment*. After establishing who the teacher and student were as people the next task was to address the problem of performance as addressing human freedom and as an ideal of both responsibility and *abandonment*.

The goal of the entire study was to demonstrate how existential ideas will help both student and teacher in the world of piano teaching and how the awareness of these ideas will open a new form of communication between them.

Existential philosophy of piano teaching involves the understanding of teacher and student as free, responsible and *abandoned* individuals. This study examined how through personal interaction, the teacher will eventually help the student realize the *anguish* of being in a college environment and of being a performer, and how through the acknowledgement and exercise of freedom and choice, the student can develop a unique voice on the instrument.

This work synthesized the findings of the research into a practical application of existential philosophy to piano teaching – the philosophy of interaction between teacher and student during the college performance major piano lesson. The author followed Brown’s model of interaction between different elements in the creation of the philosophy.¹⁷³ The present study established the idea of the teacher and student as human beings, applying Sartre’s existential philosophy. It also explored the idea of performance and its connection to Sartre’s idea of human freedom and engaged writing. The study related these ideas particularly to the college environment and community. Finally, it examined the art of teaching and how teaching as preparation for performance should create a unique interaction and relationship between professor and pupil, one incorporating Sartre’s idea of human freedom, accompanied by responsibility, and realization of *abandonment*. The study synthesized the findings into the proposed existential approach to piano teaching.

¹⁷³Brown, 6-7.

CHAPTER IV

SARTRE'S EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY

This chapter analyzes the main themes of Jean-Paul Sartre's existential philosophy as exhibited in his philosophical work, *Being and Nothingness*. In addition to the main ideas of freedom, responsibility and *abandonment*, other philosophical ideas are chosen, defined, and examined based on their relevance to piano teaching. Support is provided using practical examples from the world of piano teaching on the college level, as well as piano performance.

Freedom

Human beings are capable of imagining situations or objects which are not present. For example, Irina is playing a solo piano recital at her university. She walks upon the stage expecting to see her piano teacher in the audience. Irina's piano teacher has always been a great source of support and inspiration during her performances. However, tonight, Irina is in a critical situation - she looks, but the professor is not there. In vain, Irina surveys the faces of the entire audience. Irina is shocked and disappointed – she expected her teacher to come and support her. She no longer sees the audience, nor hears their applause. All the other people in the concert hall become a background for the teacher's absence. Awareness of the teacher's betrayal, of not being in the concert hall, haunts and overwhelms Irina's excitement over all of the fans who are present.

Human beings are conscious not only of what is present, but also of what is absent, the world of non-being. Thus, *nothingness* is created through human consciousness.

The absence of the teacher and the presence of the audience are not inside Irina's consciousness, they exist independently in the concert hall. Human consciousness has no content; it is always conscious of something outside of itself. All the objects which the consciousness directs itself toward are in the world, not in consciousness. Even mental images come from the world and are then stored in our memory.

Consciousness is always in the process of being aware of the world of *nothingness*, or non-being, which it carries within it. Consciousness makes *nothingness* arise between itself and the objects toward which it is directed by "enveloping being in non-being."¹⁷⁴ To Irina's consciousness, the presence of the people in the concert hall is defined by the absence of the teacher.

The second type of gap between consciousness and the world comes from transcendence. Consciousness always transcends, or reaches beyond itself, to reach an object and therefore places a space between itself and the object of its awareness. This space, distance or gap is *nothingness*.¹⁷⁵ Due to this gap, a person is always separated from what he or she is by what he or she is not. While Irina is performing the recital as a pianist, she is also separated from that role through projecting her consciousness to another time when the teacher was listening and supporting her, to a time where she was not the performer, but a pupil. Since we are always separated by a *nothingness* from

¹⁷⁴ Sean Blenkinsop, "Choice, Dialogue and Freedom: Towards a Philosophy of Education based in Existentialism," (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2004), 163.

¹⁷⁵ Mark Rowlands, *Externalism: Putting the Mind and World Back Together Again* (Ithaca: McGill-University Press, 2003), 69.

what we are, we can never be any one thing or have an *essence*. *Nothingness* separates the human past and present, meaning that even though the past happened, we are not the past, and therefore, we are free from it.¹⁷⁶ *Nothingness* also abolishes any human attempt at self-objectification or endeavor to only see oneself as one possibility, or as one thing. This means that man is freedom. All human attempts to escape freedom lead to failure. In freedom, a person is always separated from any *essence*, or past acts by *nothingness*.¹⁷⁷

Hence, the existential idea of *existence* preceding *essence* is created. A person cannot have an *essence* because at the core, a person is nothing, pure freedom. The *nothingness*, which always exists elsewhere and which comes to the world of being through us makes us not what we are, or *nihilates* our identity, and prevents us from assigning ourselves an *essence*. A person can never be seen as an end, because he or she is “still to be determined.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, in human reality *existence* precedes *essence* – “man surges up in the world-defines and himself afterward.”¹⁷⁹ In other words, one may never be just a bad student or a great student; the person is defined every day through actions.

Therefore, according to Sartre, humanity brings *nothingness* into the world through consciousness, and this *nothingness* is our freedom. Our freedom is not the

¹⁷⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), 64.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁷⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Existentialism is Humanism,” trans. Philip Mairet, *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman (Meridian Publishing Company, 1989), 45.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

ability to maintain wanted ends; it is solely the autonomy of choice,¹⁸⁰ or the ability to choose a course of action, or desire. Success of the fulfillment of the desire is not the type of freedom Sartre describes. Existential freedom is the freedom of *choosing* the desire.¹⁸¹ In other words, the situation we find ourselves in is not our choice, and a course of action we take to ratify it may not succeed. However, it is our freedom to choose and act in an attempt to change the situation. For example, while Irina may not have control over the absence of her teacher, she can still choose to make the best out of the situation, to give a great performance for the people who are in the audience, and to use her disappointment to help aid the expressive quality of her pieces.

Facticity

Facticity is the human presence and awareness of being in the world: awareness of our body, our social position, our profession, and all the other attributes which attempt to describe who we are in our human reality. For example, if Fabio is a pianist, even though he is always separated from that role by his freedom, “the pianist” is the awareness that Fabio and others have of him.

Our body is not a necessity, we can imagine a different body, and our body can change. In other words, the body is a “contingent form which is assumed by the necessity of my contingency.”¹⁸² We can never “comprehend this contingency as our

¹⁸⁰ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 622.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 621.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 408.

body is for us.”¹⁸³ As part of the *nothingness*, or freedom we can never really be our body because we are always in the mode of not being it. We cannot be satisfied with being our body. Our body is a part of us, and through our freedom we can choose our view of it. A pianist who has an overuse injury will only be considered a cripple, if he or she lets the condition be the end. As beings who surpass what they are, we can only be considered disabled if we choose to live or act as disabled. Our freedom always presents us with a choice of how we react in any given situation.

Outside of our body, we as human beings are engaged in a “resisting world.”¹⁸⁴ Human beings are not free in regards to their family, class, nation, and physical constitution.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, we, as possessing *nothingness*, are “threatened by being” who we are in the world. We discover the world in which we live as one which needs a reaction, one of offense or defense.¹⁸⁶ A student who wants to attend a specific school may not have the means to afford the tuition. This is the *facticity*. However, the student can always choose to fight to finance his or her attendance in the program through scholarships or loans.

A person illuminates the particular situation, a particular place, in order to wish to change it.¹⁸⁷ For example, a college piano student realizes that the composers being studied in the piano department, and who are included in the larger classical performance canon, are predominately male. While the pianist alone may not be able to

¹⁸³ Ibid., 432.

¹⁸⁴ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 621.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 619.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 627

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 635.

change the performance practice of centuries of piano playing, he or she may certainly choose to try and set an example for others by incorporating female composers into the repertoire.

The same concept of illumination applies to the past: the past is behind us, beyond our reach. We can examine the past, affirm it, but we can never be the past.¹⁸⁸ We illuminate certain events in the past, preserve them, and assign them a meaning. The past acquires its meaning from the present, from how we reflect upon it and use it.¹⁸⁹ For example, if the pianist has a memory slip, that is the past. The pianist can choose to remember the situation as one of great embarrassment, the point from which the stage elicited a sense of great fright, causing the pianist to give up performing all together and tremble at the sight of a concert stage. Or, the pianist can remember the memory slip as an amusing story to tell future students of how unexpected things occur in live performance and how it is possible to cover them up through improvisation and good acting skills. There is no action we take in the present that is caused by the past – the cause (external) or a motive (internal) is always given value by the consciousness in the present, by illuminating the past, and giving it meaning. In this sense, nothing actually predicts our present and future, except ourselves, and how we project our course of action.

We are always in flight, leaving, surpassing the past and going toward the future, as well as transcending both.¹⁹⁰ A person is “condemned to be free,” and the future is an

¹⁸⁸ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 200.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 688.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

infinite number of possibilities, all of which in the end are what the person is not because of freedom.¹⁹¹ In other words, just as the past cannot define what someone is, neither can the future. “Man brings time into being, his being is time.”¹⁹² We give meaning to our past, and we attempt to prescribe meaning to our possible future.

Freedom views the presented situation, gives it meaning, and then chooses the changes to be made.¹⁹³ For example, in a studio class the environment is a piano and a space where other students and teacher can sit and listen. A studio class could be considered a place to play through new pieces in an environment conducive to learning, or it can mean a competitive situation between the student and other pupils, all being subjected to the scrutiny of the teacher’s judgment. In either situation, the freedom of the student should illuminate the studio environment and decide whether changes need to be made. If the student senses that the class is only used to negatively assess performances, terrify the pupils, and is not helpful to preparing them for their concerts, the issue needs to be addressed and the situation changed.

Other people reveal dimensions of the *facticity* such as class, race, or physical disability, and therefore, create a sense of alienation by demonstrating aspects of the person which were not chosen.¹⁹⁴ Our being creates a situation where the other person, who is also a freedom, can alienate us or to make us exist as a form for the other.¹⁹⁵ The other limits us, while our freedom erases the limit. If a teacher calls a student a “bad

¹⁹¹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 186.

¹⁹² Hazel Barnes, *Sartre* (New York: Lippincott Company, 1973), 20.

¹⁹³ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 652.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 672.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 673.

pianist,” the student may try to incorporate that role, but without success. The student’s freedom would never encounter the limits of being a “bad pianist,” because it is an internal limit, a limit which freedom can transcend.

Existential Lack

Since we are in constant *nihilation*, we are always not what we are, and therefore, we have an innate lack, a lack of being. While objects in the world are positive, complete within themselves, human consciousness brings into the world the idea of the *existential lack*.¹⁹⁶ We are not satisfied with the present state of affairs because we know of a different state which could potentially happen. For example, if a piano is out of tune, the piano in-itself, as an object, is complete. It takes the person listening to the piano, to declare the piano is not tuned properly, and to ask that adjustments be made for it to be what it is currently not. Hence, desire is the proof of the *existential lack*. Desire is haunted by the project it desires.¹⁹⁷

Abandonment

We have the freedom to choose anything except for our own freedom. We are “condemned to freedom,” thrown into the world and *abandoned*.¹⁹⁸ Sartre’s philosophy is

¹⁹⁶ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 135.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 623.

the idea that if God is taken out of the equation and there are no more moral codes which a person has to follow, then “everything is permitted.”¹⁹⁹ This places humanity in charge of its own decisions, actions, and the responsibility which comes with them. There are no rules, rewards, excuses or forgiveness. We decide and commit ourselves to our decision. We are not the foundation of our own being, and from the moment of existence are responsible for everything we do. We find ourselves *abandoned* in the world alone and without help, carrying an immense responsibility from which there is no escape.²⁰⁰ Upon entering college, students often search for people to tell them what to do: how to manage their time, how to practice efficiently, how to deal with performance anxiety. However, no one can really help them figure out these issues. As they are thrown into the responsibilities of a college environment, students need to find their own solutions.

Along with *abandonment*, we also have a feeling of *despair*. Since we are alone, and no one can help us, by “adapting the world” to our possibilities, we must “act without hope,”²⁰¹ hope for unattainable ends. We must limit ourselves to rely on what we can achieve. “Reality alone is reliable.”²⁰² Hopes, wishes and dreams place us on a plane beyond our control, defining us negatively – we must only choose what we indeed have the power –the possibility to choose and be responsible for our decisions. Men are alone in the universe, choosing in despair their own way in life.²⁰³ For example, once a pianist walks onto the concert stage, they are *abandoned* and alone – the piano teacher can no

¹⁹⁹ Sartre, “Existentialism and Humanism,” 32.

²⁰⁰ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 710.

²⁰¹ Sartre, “Existentialism and Humanism,” 35.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁰³ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 119.

longer help. The student must make performance and interpretive decisions, and must face the consequences of those choices.

Anguish

In *anguish*, a person faces the freedom he or she is incapable of escaping.²⁰⁴ Michael is having coffee with a friend, but he really needs to practice for an upcoming concert. Nothing prevents Michael from leaving the coffee shop or from procrastinating his practice time. This is a choice only he can make. Nothing compels or prevents Michael from acting one way or another; all plans for action are only possibilities.

In *anguish* we realize that the meaning of the world comes from us, from the meaning we assign to it.²⁰⁵ By continuing to socialize with his friend, Michael adds more value to his friendship than to his practicing. We are “thrust” into the world and have to choose our possibilities of action.²⁰⁶

Even if we choose not to make a decision, this is also a choice.²⁰⁷ If Michael ignores the choice and just continues to drink coffee, avoiding the guilty thoughts about practicing, he is still making a choice, a choice to hide from his freedom. We cannot escape our freedom. Our actions and choices create who we are every day. Our responsibility which these choices carry with them further ignites our *anguish*. However, people attempt to flee *anguish* by designating themselves as things or objects. They also

²⁰⁴ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 65.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 78.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 75.

²⁰⁷ Sartre, “Existentialism and Humanism,” 41.

attempt to “veil” *anguish* and *nililate* it in order to flee it by lying to themselves in *bad faith*.

Bad Faith

Bad faith occurs when consciousness does not direct itself toward the world; but rather, it directs itself inward, toward itself.²⁰⁸ Instead of looking at the world and attempting to become aware and classify objects, it attempts to become aware of itself as an object, to classify itself and to give itself an *essence*. Instead of looking out into the world, the person attempts to look and classify him or herself.

Bad faith essentially means consciousness lying to itself while and at the same time understanding that it is lying.²⁰⁹ *Bad faith* attempts to deny either the person’s freedom or *facticity* and attempts to justify the acts committed by declaring itself as only a consciousness, or only a body.

There are several types of *bad faith*. The first type is separating the body from the consciousness in order to avoid facing freedom and making a choice. It means the person affirms freedom to not be an object, but instead of acting upon that freedom and changing the situation, the person ignores the choice to act.²¹⁰ An example of such *bad faith* is a piano student studying with someone whose teaching philosophy differs, but

²⁰⁸ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 87.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 89.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 99.

instead of attempting to discuss the matter or switch teachers, the student instead daydreams of a perhaps better situation or better past times of piano studies.

This type of *bad faith* also involves escaping one's conduct by declaring that, as consciousness, the conduct doer cannot be the sum of the past and present deeds.²¹¹ The person performing the actions may believe in self-sincerity when relaying the events to others. However, as a being separated by the gap of *nothingness* from what one is, using consciousness to escape responsibility for action fails. An example is a piano student who has not practiced for the concert but tells the teacher that he or she is ready.

The second type of *bad faith* involves a person "playing" at being an object.²¹² It is the piano student who is so focused on acting eager to learn, on agreeing with the criticism of the teacher, that he or she forgets the freedom to have an opinion about the teaching method, technique, or interpretation. The second type of *bad faith* allows the student, a free being, to be imprisoned in the role of following instructions. There are people in the world who refuse to see the past as obedient to freedom; they, in *bad faith*, define or objectify themselves by their past (e.g. "I had a memory slip on stage when I was young, and therefore, I am a terrible performer.").²¹³

Indifference also fails as a project. In indifference, the person walks in blindness, treating everyone as functions, or imprisoning people into the roles they play in life, and pretending to be alone in the world, in other words – another type of *bad faith*.²¹⁴ In indifference the piano student only treats the teacher as the role of a teacher and ignores

²¹¹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 108.

²¹² Ibid., 103.

²¹³ Ibid., 647

²¹⁴ Ibid., 495.

the person's freedom or the person behind the role. In indifference, there is the teacher who expresses no opinions about the student's playing.

The Other, the Look, Concrete Relations with Others

“The original sin is my upsurge in the world where there are others.”²¹⁵

We are constantly fleeing ourselves through *nihilation*. We are always in the mode of not being what we are. Even if we attempted to “know ourselves,” we are still taking the point of view of others.²¹⁶ However, the presence of *others* changes the situation. The *other*, through the *look*, makes us feel imprisoned in being what we are, making us into an object, and ignoring our *nihilation*.²¹⁷ We apprehend the other doing this while, in fact, he or she may not be.

The student can trap the teacher into one role, that of the teacher, and not respect the teacher's other roles, abusing the teacher's time and dedication, and causing problems for the teacher's performing and practice schedule. The teacher, in turn, can focus on only defining the student only as performer and cause the pupil to ignore other academic responsibilities. As objects having only one role, the student and teacher, when *looking* at each other, narrow each other's possibilities. Our attitude toward the *other* is always changing between subject and object.²¹⁸ We are either *looking* at others and making

²¹⁵ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 531.

²¹⁶ Sartre, *Transcendence of the Ego*, 87.

²¹⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 473.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 529.

them feel objectified, as subject, or they are looking at us, and we apprehend ourselves as becoming the object. Others become the limit of our freedom.²¹⁹

The *other possesses* us by painting the picture of us, a picture which we are responsible for but which we did not draw.²²⁰ In other words, we cannot control how others view us, but their point of view adds to our human reality or *facticity*. For example, one is not embarrassed by his or her body; one is embarrassed by the body as it is for-others. Therefore, language is originally *being-for-others*. Like a mirror, language acknowledges the existence of the *other*, and through the use of adjectives, places our image of ourselves into the *other's* hands.²²¹ When the student is nervous before a concert about how he or she will perform, the student is not nervous about the performance, but about the reception of the performance by faculty and other audience members.

Love, Masochism and Sadism

To assume the part of *being-for-others* in love is to become the ultimate value and to be placed as the center of reference, ordering the surrounding things in the world as means. Under the *look* of love we are not longer the same object as we are under a normal *look*. The world begins to be revealed to the other through us.²²² When we are loved, it seems that our life has a purpose and we feel that our being is justified.

²¹⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 530.

²²⁰ Ibid., 475.

²²¹ Ibid., 463.

²²² Ibid., 481.

However, the project fails, because the true project of love is to wish the other loved back, but if the other loves back, he or she becomes the object, “swallowed” up by the lover’s subjectivity.²²³ The lovers are also in a state of insecurity, because they always risk making each other into an object. Not only are they insecure about each other’s *looks*, they are also confronted by the world and a third person. The appearance of the third person brings back reality and makes the lovers experience themselves as objects.²²⁴

Sartre’s project of being loved is similar to that of the teacher/student relationship. The student (Sartre’s lover) puts the teacher (the beloved) on a pedestal against which all artistic (moral) decisions are made. When the teacher shows admiration, or respect for the student (love), the student feels his or her existence is justified with a purpose. All of the sudden, the student is no longer another pupil or pianist in the world – now there is an audience member, a fan who believes the pupil is special and has potential as an artist. However, just like love, at any given moment the relationship is doomed to be revealed as not-successful. The student can admire or worship the professor while surrendering subjectivity and individualism to blindly follow every command. The teacher can praise the student to the point where the pupil no longer views the professor as an authority figure. In other words, the teacher can objectify the student, making the pupil an object to be taught, or the teacher can admire the student so much that the pupil has complete power over the professor, objectifying the professor as a means to achieve career ends. Finally, there are also others involved: other students, other faculty members and administrators. The presence of all the others *looking* at the student-teacher relationship makes them feel objectified and breaks their spell of fascination with each other.

²²³ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 490.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 491.

Some masochistic students aim at allowing the teacher to humiliate and psychologically, or even physically, damage them. However, as Sartre writes, masochism also fails. Because while the student allows the teacher to act a certain way in various situations, it is the student who is allowing, who is giving herself or himself to the teacher to be mistreated. The choice ultimately is the student's, who can always switch piano studios.²²⁵

Sadism also fails as a project. The sadist wants to place him or herself at the center of all action, to become a pure transcendence, and therefore, escape personal *facticity*,²²⁶ therefore permanently establishing the self as the subject and the other as an object. However, by inflicting pain on the other, the sadist becomes an *instrument of pain*,²²⁷ an object causing pain, and therefore, not a transcendence. The sadist teacher does not establish the self as a subject for the student to respect, but rather as an object which the student fears but does not respect. The student sadist who is critical and malicious about the playing of other students does not become the subject which they admire and want to befriend; he or she becomes the object of detest and disgust. Being the object of hate is precisely that - being an object.²²⁸

²²⁵ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 493.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 518.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 519.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 532.

Others, the Third and the Dead

Being with-others also involves the *us-object*, an experience of solidarity with the other, in the appearance of the *third*.²²⁹ The interaction of two people changes when they apprehend that there is a *third* person *looking* at them, and apprehending them together, as one entity. The *third* is the piano teacher who is listening to students in their studio class.

Our attitude toward others is not only limited to the living. We also have a relation to the dead. We can choose to *annihilate* the dead, to group them into categories into a collective existence, as opposed to a personal one. To annihilate the dead would be to refer to “women composers,” as opposed to Cecile Chaminade and Amy Beach. We decide whether to preserve anonymous masses or distinct individuals.²³⁰ Finally, the dead also represent a great responsibility for us – we decide their fate.²³¹ The living “pass judgment” on the life of the dead.²³² We can preserve the traditional male classical composer canon, or we can add women composers and change not only the canon of music history, but also of music performance.

²²⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 541.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 693.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 694.

²³² Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit*, in *No Exit and Three Other Plays*, trans. I. Abel (New York, Vintage Books, 1989), 39.

Responsibility

Existentialism is an ethics of self-commitment and action, placing the responsibility of decisions into the hands of human reality.²³³ We bring *value* into the world and affirm it by our choice of actions.²³⁴

A person commits to a certain action and carries it out, and this realization is what he or she becomes to the world. One draws a self-portrait in life.²³⁵ We are condemned to freedom, without excuse, and are responsible for all of our choices and actions.

The *act* is an expression of freedom, which decides both its ends and motives.²³⁶ To commit an *act* is to intentionally change something in the world.²³⁷ If a pianist intentionally performs a piece badly, this is an act. If a pianist is sick, and as a result cannot perform well, this is not an act.

We are always beyond the causes of our acts by transcending them through the *nihilation*. We can not blame our acts on outside causes. We are condemned to choosing ourselves, and nothing external can affect us in this process. We are always separated from what is and what will be by *nothingness*. Our actions are separated from the cause, and from our future by the present in which we are *abandoned* to choose at each moment. If a student stays up all night writing a paper the night before a recital and performs badly, the student cannot blame the performance on lack of sleep. Since it was the

²³³Sartre, "Existentialism and Humanism," 38.

²³⁴ Ibid., 34.

²³⁵ Ibid., 37.

²³⁶Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 565.

²³⁷ Ibid., 559

student's choice to exercise poor time management, to procrastinate on the project, stay up late to finish it, and not adequately plan for the amount of rest needed in recital preparation, the student's action of playing badly is separated from the cause of the lack of sleep. The lack of sleep was only one factor in the preparation for the performance. There are many potential and equally possible causes which an act may have, but it is the student who is assigning one particular cause to the act. While we may attribute causes to our acts, at the core we are without excuse because, regardless, we are responsible for our choice of action.

Because man is forced to make choices and act at every instant, "he carries the weight of the world on his shoulders."²³⁸ The responsibility for every deed a person performs is a heavy weight to carry, because it is the burden of freedom. Man is the author of choice and of the possibilities acted upon within a situation; man is "without excuse."²³⁹ We are thrown into the world, *abandoned*, and in *anguish*, we realize our existence and responsibility.

"Man is condemned at every instant to invent man."²⁴⁰ Sartre is not only referring to the particular person, but to the whole of mankind. "In fashioning myself, I fashion man." A person is not only responsible for personal choice, but for "legislating" for all of mankind. By committing the self to a particular practice or situation, a person sets precedence for all others in the world to also commit themselves to a similar course of action.²⁴¹ For example, by criticizing a student with only negative comments, the teacher

²³⁸ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 707.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 709.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

sets a precedent for future generations of students, the future students of the present pupil to also be negatively assessed. By choosing to perform traditional repertoire of the classical canon, and, or, interpreting it in the way most commonly accepted, the pianist sets an example for future pianists, and students to do this same, and to not challenge the musical status quo. This profound sense of responsibility, of awareness of complete freedom and the need to make a decision contributes to *anguish*²⁴² or human anxiety.

Conclusion

This chapter described the main themes in Sartre's existential philosophy. While this doctoral essay focuses on applying the ideas of freedom, responsibility and *abandonment* to college piano teaching, other Sartrean ideas described in this chapter will help lay the groundwork for the discussion of the teacher and student relationship in later chapters. Sartre's ideas of concrete relations with others, *bad faith*, and the *existential lack* are necessary in order to understand the implications of the full range of interaction of professors and pupils in the college environment.

²⁴² Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 30.

CHAPTER V

SETTING THE STAGE: WHAT IS PERFORMANCE?

Jean-Paul Sartre has written several short works on the idea of art as engagement – of art taking a stance. Sartre describes music from a compositional point of view. This chapter will analyze some of these works and apply Sartre’s ideas of engagement and of a committed art to music performance. Support will be provided through writings drawn from music philosophy, and the interviews of famous pianists. The chapter will then discuss ideas of responsibility, as it applies to music interpretation, and of *abandonment*, as it applies to stage-fright. The end result will be to provide a philosophy of performance as freedom, responsibility, and *abandonment*, which encompasses existential *anguish* and the view of audience as the *other*.

Sartre’s Philosophy of “Committed Art” and Engagement as Applied to Music

Sartre asks the following question in the preface to the *Artist and His Conscience*:

Is it so impossible that an artist will emerge in the world today, and without any literary intention, or interest in signifying, still have enough passion, to love and hate it, to live its contradictions with enough sincerity, and to plan to change it with enough perseverance, that he will transform even this world, with its savage violence, its barbarism, its refined techniques, its slaves, its tyrants, its mortal threats and our horrible and grandiose freedom into music?²⁴³

²⁴³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations*, trans. Benita Eisler (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1965), 222.

In other words, can a musical artist commit him or herself to transferring freedom into music? In the preceding preface the word “artist” refers to a composer.

When speaking of the art of prose, Sartre describes writing as an event of both the reader and the author and states the reader has to be “a part of the equation” for writing to communicate, to evoke a response and to have value.²⁴⁴ However, in music, there is a third element connecting the composer and audience, and that is the performer.

Composers do not directly share their music with the audience, and therefore, interact with them. Although the composer interacts with the performer who is studying and playing the composer’s music, the composer does not have the opportunity to audibly express what is on the written page. Even the composers who have recorded and/or performed their own works sometimes play the works differently than what they have indicated in the score, assuming the role of a performer, as opposed to someone directly preserving and passing down the composition.

Sartre’s view of music, as of the written composition, could have been shaped by the fact that he himself, while playing the piano on a daily basis and even giving piano lessons, never performed in public.²⁴⁵ Perhaps if Sartre were a performer, he would have had a different point of view about music, a view of a performance art as opposed to a written, static art. As David Elliott says, music is a human activity, “music is something that people do.”²⁴⁶ Musical works are written but are heard through the action of the

²⁴⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Sartre by Himself*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), 44.

²⁴⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Self-Portrait at Seventy” in *Life/Situations*, trans. Paul Auster and Lydia Davis (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 37.

²⁴⁶ David Elliott, *Music Matters*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 39.

person “musicing,” because music existed long before the notion of the written composition.²⁴⁷

The direct transfer of the musical score to listener happens in a live concert setting. Even if the audience member is listening to a recording there is not a visual presence, the stage presence of the performer to facilitate the interaction between the two individuals. Murray Perahia spoke of the “emotional transformation” of experiencing music that takes place only on the stage. A song sung in public is only really sung when it is live, bringing all the artist’s emotions.²⁴⁸ Leon Fleisher takes this idea further by stating that the artist is “enlivened by the music.”²⁴⁹

Only the performing artist can transfer freedom into music and awaken the audience member’s realization of choice during the performance through the encounter, confrontation and acknowledgment of the performer/audience, through artistic decisions, and through the act of playing/participating in a work of art live during a concert. Music performance – through the relationship of the performer to the audience, and through the realization of all the choices the performer makes – can serve as a healing device, a way to channel everyone’s common bond of humanity and, as a result, make them aware of their freedom.

Sartre also believes that music was not able to act as a committed art, or an art which is engaged or committed to relaying a specific message because it is a non-

²⁴⁷ Elliott, 49.

²⁴⁸ Elyse Mach. *Great Contemporary Pianists Speak For Themselves* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1988), 215-216.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

signifying art.²⁵⁰ Sartre believes that unlike writing, which has words with a specific message to the reader, musical composition cannot deliver a message in the same way. A committed music, according to Sartre, would have the commitment found “in its intuitive reality,” without a reference to anything on the outside, such as the artist or the artist’s epoch.²⁵¹ Sartre believes music has reference only to the time period it was written or to the hardships which the composer experienced.

Sartre thinks music may have a meaning but does not signify. He explains the difference by saying that something signifies when it refers to something outside of it, while something has meaning when it “incarnates a reality which transcends it but which cannot be apprehended outside of it.”²⁵² He states that musical notes are not signs because they do not refer to anything outside of themselves.²⁵³ An emotion, a grief, which is transformed into a musical melody is not a grief anymore.²⁵⁴ While an emotion can create a musical work, it will be “swallowed up,” and the piece will just be “haunted by a mysterious soul.”²⁵⁵

Once again, Sartre is only thinking of music as a composition, as something which is static on the written page. But, music is a performing art, and unlike literature, music comes to life only in performance. Musical performance by nature is a combination of the relationship of the performer to the composer and the performer to the

²⁵⁰ Sartre, *Situations*, 214.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 216.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 217.

²⁵³ Sartre, *What is Writing?* in *Essays in Existentialism* (New York: Citadel Press Book, 1993), 304.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 306.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 307.

audience. Of course the composer also has a connection to the audience, but the performer serves as the transmitter of the message, the facilitator of the communication. While the composer may be the original subject of the compositional emotions, the performer becomes the composer's "confidant" and "mouthpiece."²⁵⁶ All three elements are required for the awakening of freedom: composer's decisions in treatment of musical material, performer's choice in interpretation of the composition, and the audience's reception and acknowledgment of the original message from the composer, coated in the emotional output and stage presentation of the performer.

While Sartre is right in that music does not portray a specific emotion which the composer may have had in mind while composing the piece, as Susanne Langer wrote, music does "articulate feelings without being wedded to them."²⁵⁷ In other words, music transfers abstract emotional ideas to the listener, and it is up to the listener to interpret them. Music has all the signs of being symbolic, except for an assigned connotation. Therefore, music is an "unconsummated symbol," "articulation but not assertion," expressiveness, not expression."²⁵⁸ In other words, while music does portray feelings, the feelings are not specified, they are to be interpreted by performer and listener. Therefore, while Sartre is right about the fact that music does not have significance as far as it does not signify anything specific, he is wrong in assuming that it lacks signification all together. Music significance can be interpreted differently by performers and listeners.

²⁵⁶ Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 215.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 244.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 240.

Therefore, how does the engaged performing artist, through the use of Langer's idea of the unconsummated musical symbol, transfer freedom to the audience? The answer can be found in Sartre's description of existential psychoanalysis and of writing.

Existential psychoanalysis attempts to find the original choice.²⁵⁹ Its aim is to illuminate the choices one makes in order to make him or herself into a being. In other words, existential psychoanalysis examines how each person defines his or her place in the world, presence to the world, and how each person deals with a particular situation.²⁶⁰ It is aimed at evaluating the individual, the particular, as opposed to an abstract common behavior, and takes into account the idea that human beings are constantly changing.²⁶¹ With the help of the "investigator" or psychoanalyst, another human reality, the patient discovers what it means to be human.²⁶²

The performer and audience relationship parallels that of existential psychoanalysis. Each performance is a session. The set up of the room is different, and there are other audience members present, but the relationship is there. Sartre said in an interview that he did not believe music should be heard in a large concert hall; it should be enjoyed individually in a more intimate setting.²⁶³ However, the talent of the performer lies in being able to have a unique conversation with every audience member who comes to the concert, regardless of the size of the venue. Since music is a symbol

²⁵⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1984), 728.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 734.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 730.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 734.

²⁶³ Sartre, "Self-Portrait at Seventy," 40.

without a specific reference point, the symbol the performer provides will be exhibited differently in the mind of each audience member.

There is a psychological space between the person on stage, and the person in the audience. The stage is far away, raised and illuminated. The audience member, however, is in the dark below and close to everyone else surrounding the stage. The difference of location may suggest that one individual has power over the other. It would be difficult to judge who is the dominant figure in the relationship. Logically, since the performer seems to be higher up and in the spotlight, he or she would be the main event of the night. However, the audience produces the applause, and it is to the audience that the performer bows at the end of the performance.

The bow is the key to understanding the performance. It is the only physical form of relation the performer has to the audience: when they clap, the pianist bows. Performers bow in recognition of the audience, thanking them for the applause, and thanking them for coming to the concert. But, more importantly, the pianist bows as a sign that the prior conversation which occurred meant as much to the performer as to the listener. The bow is an acknowledgement. There is nothing worse than a pianist who does not bow or bows so abruptly that the audience senses he or she feels forced to do so. One may think of the clapping and the bowing as the welcome and parting remarks between the psychiatrist and the patient. There is evidence that pianists view performing as healing. For example, Emil Gilels referred to performing as “best medicine” for sickness.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ Mach, 126.

Sartre believes language, the spoken word, casts the writer into the midst of the world.²⁶⁵ Writing is utilitarian, and the writer uses words to convey his or her attitude, or stance on a topic.²⁶⁶ The writer is directly challenging or convincing the reader of something. Language is an extension of our body; we use it as any other tool, such as a rock picked up in a defense situation, in the course of undertaking, of either acting upon others, or of others acting upon us. Either way, language is an action.²⁶⁷

Sartre's idea of engagement in writing can be easily applied to musical performance. Heinrich Neuhaus speaks about the concert pianist as a "propagandist." Arthur Rubinstein speaks of feeling a "special current between the public and me, the current which inspires me to play."²⁶⁸ The "current" is the idea of a free flow of communication, the channeling of the other's humanity. This current is the idea of choice. The pianist has many choices before a performance: what music to play, how to interpret it, and how to present it to the audience.

The music the pianist chooses to program reflects what works the pianist deems appropriate, or valuable for people to hear. For example, a pianist who programs only standard classical music repertoire is ignoring works by overlooked female composers. A pianist who only plays repertoire by contemporary composers who are famous is not allowing equally talented composers to rise to the view of the public. In both situations, the pianist is taking a stance and affirming, rather than challenging, the current attitude of the musical world. Neuhaus described Sviatoslav Richter's commitment to performing

²⁶⁵ Sartre, *What is Writing?*, 311.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 317.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 318.

²⁶⁸ Mach, 249.

lesser known compositions as “broadening the level of artistic culture and musical experiences,”²⁶⁹ a choice of challenging the artistic status quo.

Sartre states that a writer’s style is not the topic chosen but the way it is presented.²⁷⁰ However, in music, every time someone programs a concert, or allows someone else, such as a manager, to tell the performer what to play, choices are made, and hidden statements follow those choices.

In music, the style of performance is the interpretive decisions one makes: tempo, articulation, dynamics, and pedaling. Each one of those musical aspects can drastically change the opinion the audience has of a piece, whether it be the first time they heard it, or if they already have a preconceived notion of the work based on other performances.

Finally, there is the visual form of engagement – stage presence. Stage presence is the way certain performers captivate their audiences while they are on stage: what they are wearing, their body language, their gestures, how they walk toward the piano, and how they bow. All of those aspects act as signals to the audience. The way a pianist approaches the instrument has much to do with the audience response. If the person is terribly shy, looks at the floor the entire time, and runs on and off the stage, the audience is going to have a very untrustworthy view of the performer. If the pianist is not confident enough about walking in front of them, how could he or she possibly convince them of anything in the music? Audiences want to feel comfortable in intrusting themselves to a particular performer. Therefore, confidence and acknowledgement, especially through the bow, are two key elements in giving them such comfort.

²⁶⁹ Heinrich Neuhaus., *The Art of Piano Playing*, trans. K.A. Leibovitch (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 204.

²⁷⁰ Sartre, *What is Writing?*, 322.

The most important aspect of stage presence, the gestures and body motions one makes while performing, is the most elusive. While it is commonly known that the way one starts and ends a piece creates or destroys its atmosphere, what happens in between is the boundary between artistry and comedy. If the performer's gestures are natural, if they help the audience feel swept away by the music, then it is art. If the gestures are grotesquely exaggerated to the point of making a mockery of the emotions in the piece, the performance is clearly overdone. Similar to a counseling session, any body language of the psychiatrist may affect the story the patient is relaying.

The pianist also, to some degree, feels the audience's reaction – whether cell phones are ringing, if people are snoring, or the audience wows and silently follows the music. Sartre wrote of jazz as “possessing” the listener, of the “rhythm grabbing” the audience member and rocking him or her to the beat.²⁷¹ But, the performers who play public recitals are aware that while Sartre is right that Chopin sometimes makes people dream,²⁷² classical music can also possess an audience member as an *idée fixe*, and the performer can sense from the stage whether or not the audience is mesmerized. Sartre describes the process of listening to music in a concert hall as one of imagination, of leaving existence and the real. Music takes the listener into a different imaginary world.²⁷³

²⁷¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Nick’s Bar, New York City” in *The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 184.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 183.

²⁷³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Psychology of the Imagination*, in *Jean-Paul Sartre, Basic Writings* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 297.

Sartre states that while an artist may speak about human freedom, the language is foreign to the listener.²⁷⁴ Sartre explains that the general public does not understand music, due to their lack of musical knowledge, while the elite, who can afford the training, do not need the message of freedom which music can send.²⁷⁵ Sartre is mostly referring to modern music, and the fact that one must have a certain amount of training in musical theory in order to understand and appreciate it. According to Sartre, since the average audience is of the working class, they may not have access to music education, and therefore, cannot appreciate the art in front of them. However, the elite, who can afford to take lessons, are the ones who do not need music to speak to them of liberation.

Sartre, once again, is only looking at music as a composition. It would be one situation if the audience was expected to read a musical score themselves and understand what it's about. But, the audience also has a transmitter – the performer. It is the job of the performer to engage in the modern musical composition and relay it to the audience in a way in which they can add their own meaning to it. The audience member does not need to have musical training in order to receive the message of freedom which the engaged performer sends.

Some performers may choose to orally engage with their audience. At the present age, with low attendance at classical concerts and the lack of new audience recruitment, the performer speaking about the composition, the composer, the composer's time period, and the performer's own view about the piece he or she is playing may serve to help the audience understand and appreciate the music. If classical music was not thought of as

²⁷⁴ Sartre, *The Artist and His Conscience*, 210.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

something elite and outside of everyone's reach, maybe more people would be willing to be exposed to it and enjoy it. It is also important to remember that since audiences who do not listen to classical music are unlikely to come to the concert hall, it may be a good idea for the artist to go to them. A pianist may choose community engagement as another way of sharing his or her freedom with the world. The pianist could go out to retirement homes, public schools, and other venues where the people are eager and willing to have someone come and share their experiences with art.

All of the aspects incorporated into a performance signify the performer's freedom and the choices made. These choices are the musical commitment, or what Sartre, when referring to literature, described as "re-examining," accepting or questioning a given situation.²⁷⁶ The audience member, listening and watching the performance, feels the choices. Although the feeling may be different for everyone, at the core, everything goes back to the idea of freedom and of channeling the human consciousness.

Sartre writes that by writing, one recognizes the freedom of the readers, and the reader recognizes the freedom of the writer; therefore, the work of art is "an act of confidence in the freedom of men." In other words, the arts liberate those who choose to listen, and appeal to each person's individual consciousness, no matter if they are in a concert hall or if they are in a private recital setting.²⁷⁷

Neuhaus in his book about the *Art of Piano Playing* writes that "man is called upon to communicate to the people who have come to hear him something important, significant, deep, and different from the daily humdrum experiences, thoughts and

²⁷⁶ Sartre, *Sartre By Himself*, 65.

²⁷⁷ Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning* (New York: Teachers College Press), 166.

feelings.”²⁷⁸ In other words, people come to classical concerts to hear freedom transferred into music. The pianist has a responsibility to confront personal freedom and choice and to pass the *anguish*, or the realization of human freedom to the audience.

Byron Janis said “music transcends both piano and pianist.”²⁷⁹ Musicians transcend their reality, and realize their freedom, as coming from *nothingness*, and in the process, share this freedom with their audiences. Performance is not only the audience *looking* at the performer. Performance is also a conversation between the performer and audience member, made possible and facilitated by the language and ideas of the composer.

Art calls on people to consciously awaken their freedom. Encounter with the arts cause “human beings to be in touch with themselves.”²⁸⁰ The artist Sartre speaks of as bringing freedom may or may not be a composer but certainly a performer. As long as live performance exists, our “horrible, grandiose freedom”²⁸¹ can be brought out in music and also channeled and released to the audience.

²⁷⁸ Neuhaus, 211.

²⁷⁹ Mach, 140.

²⁸⁰ Greene, 165.

²⁸¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations*, trans. Benita Eisler (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1965), 222.

Responsibility

A pianist has a double responsibility – one to the audience and one to the composer. Emil Gilels said the pianist must “be caught in the spirit of the work, but at the same time remain true to the composer and yet independent as an artist.”²⁸²

The concert hall, the moment, and audience, create a “double-fantasy.”²⁸³ Sartre describes a similar idea when referring to the “double phenomenon” of both the reader and the writer.²⁸⁴

In the case of performance in an education setting, the level of responsibility is intensified. The pianist who is a student also has responsibility to the teacher, and the pianist who is a teacher has a responsibility to set an example of what a performer should be to all the students and their future students.

Sartre claims the writer, by taking the action of speaking through prose, acknowledges the fact that he or she is seen by others. The engaged writer does not write unless there is something which is important enough to be said, an act which confides in the readers.²⁸⁵ The writer reveals a particular situation, a situation which both the others, readers, and the writer need to change. Thus, the engaged writer speaks of a situation in order to change it.²⁸⁶

²⁸² Mach, 123.

²⁸³ Ibid., 124.

²⁸⁴ Sartre, *Sartre by Himself*, 44.

²⁸⁵ Sartre, *What is Writing*, 319.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 320.

The writer engages in writing to make the reader aware of the fact that the surrounding world, and the reader as well, is responsible for the current state of affairs.²⁸⁷ In other words, the writer awakens the reader's responsibility for the world.

Likewise, the performer through the choice of works and composers he or she programs, through the choice of clothing, and through the choice of interpretation is setting a precedent. The pianist is either providing a challenge or is remaining complacent with the current place of the musical world. Therefore, the performer is responsible for being engaged in an examination of the musical world through freedom and choice. A piano teacher who is preparing future performers has a duty to allow students to be aware of the many choices they need to make as artists on and prior to entering the stage.

A musical performance takes a composer's writing and adds alternate meanings or eliminates the abstract from what is written. And, the listener, who only hears what the performer presents, only has that particular interpretation of the work. Whatever meaning the performer adds or subtracts from a composition is what a composition is when it is heard.

Therefore, performance cannot just be viewed as a part of passing down the art of the composer. Performance must be viewed as an art in itself – an art of the artist looking into the consciousness of the composer on the page, adding a subjective point of view, along with that of teachers and colleagues, and streaming all of that emotional and mental output to the listener and, hopefully heightening the understanding of what it is like to be human and free. There is a double responsibility on behalf of the performer – to the

²⁸⁷ Sartre, *What is Writing*, 321.

composer, and to the audience. The pianist is both the “legislative and the executive” branch in the performance – carrying out the composer’s wishes and infusing the work with “creative will and personality.”²⁸⁸

In order to examine what makes a performance or a new work of art successful, it is necessary to analyze what goes into a true performance. In today’s classical piano world, performers are usually not composers, at least while they are performing other people’s works. While there are exceptions to this rule, since there are pianists who are also composers and who elaborate or change the works of the composers of the past while they perform or record them, these artists usually acknowledge such actions as ones of choice, or intent, and the pieces which are thus created are in no way to be taken to represent what the composer actually wrote. A classical piano composition which has been altered by the performer becomes a work “arranged” by that performer. The preservation of the original composition of the composer has become of most importance in today’s concert world.

The preservation of the music through the score has, as Morris Grossman puts it, become important both in terms of what the score “energetically and forcefully prescribes and what it cannot, and indeed, refuses to prescribe.” It places a “special kind of egalitarian neutrality and makes a generalized demand upon all who use it.”²⁸⁹ The score invites interpretation.²⁹⁰ The score gives each pianist an equal playing ground with

²⁸⁸ Neuhaus, 223.

²⁸⁹ Morris Grossman, “Performance and Obligation” in *What is Music? An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music*, ed. Philip Alperson (University Park: Haven Publications, Inc., 1987). 260.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 261.

which to express what he or she wishes, while at the same time demands that certain kinds of standards be upheld.

The score is important to performers and composers because it establishes certain guidelines for both obedience and originality. It does not encourage exactness in performances nor complete interpretive freedoms.²⁹¹ The score dictates what is expected out of respect to the tradition, composer or time period, but at the same time, also leaves gaps which performers themselves are expected to fill.

Whereas a score “fixes a syntactical structure,” the “performance fixes dynamics and emotion.” The score directs the notes, the pitches sounding, but does not directly control the “relations between tones.” The touch of human fingers, whether inspired by choice or chance, directs how the notes are linked together, and their relationships to each other on the broader scope of the entire composition. Therefore, the call to freedom is embodied in the score.²⁹²

As Grossman writes, a “performer for the life of him could not play a score straight.” Musical ideas and alterations, such as variations in dynamics and tempo, are “no longer consciously chosen but are built into mind and fingers, body and breath.”²⁹³ Adding something new and personal is a part of the human condition which the pianist on stage cannot escape no matter how hard he or she tries. Even if the pianist tries to not vary the tempo at all or maintains the simplest dynamics, that is also a personal approach, one which will surely stand out from all the others.

²⁹¹ Grossman, 260.

²⁹² Ibid., 260.

²⁹³ Ibid, 262.

Tempo changes, for example, have “hidden meanings.” They can showcase technical skill when they are fast, or faster than what is generally expected, or they can also create the appearance of being “helpless and lost” when they are too slow, sounding “incompetent.”²⁹⁴ But, to anyone who actually performs music, it is well known that tempo changes are much deeper than just virtuosity or fear of speed. Tempo changes are often conscious decisions, something thought much about, and something which does not happen by chance. Of course, while being on stage with nerves in stage fright, it is possible to play too fast from excitement or to slow down and emote in the notes. But besides those chance, special moments, performers place much planning and meaning into tempi, which go far beyond what is written on the page.

The performer has an obligation and responsibility to the tempo, both suggested by composer and to the one the performer chooses. The composers “do better to suggest than to command.” “Good composers will “oblige performers to exercise their freedoms, and good performers will recognize and practice their freedoms, appreciating, but not abusing the liberties that composers allow.”²⁹⁵ Tempo “cannot be safely, neutrally and universally prescribed.”²⁹⁶

In other words, the right tempo is not the one that is printed in the score; it is a combination – a conversation between the composer’s idea, and how the performer chooses to approach sharing it with the audience. And, the approach a particular pianist uses at a particular performance will determine the outcome – the composition the

²⁹⁴ Grossman, 270.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 273.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 270.

audience will hear. The same piece played at a different tempo is not the same piece. Given that no two performances can ever be the same in tempo, even if played by the same person, a pianist always alters a particular composition.

Tempo depends on the “performer’s mood and personality, on internal rhythms like heart beats and brain waves, on emotions and excitements.”²⁹⁷ A performer who is in love, who is heartbroken, or who has a migraine or a heart condition has to deal with these emotional and physical interferences or additions to the performance. While emotions or conditions which go against the mood of the piece can be problematic, emotions which add to the atmosphere can be powerful. Sometimes, playing a piece that is depressing while the pianist is in a good mood can change the character of the piece, or the mood of the performer.

All of this is to say that pianists are human, and that is what makes performance exciting and what creates an art – they do not simply transfer what is in the score. The combination of the composer’s composition and the natural inspiration of the other human performer combined create a work of art, one even more alive with emotion than what the composer could have imagined.

Besides the liberties one may take with the tempo/rubato in the piece, one may also be creative with the dynamics. Just because a dynamic marking is not written into the score does not mean the dynamics should remain on the same level. It is almost impossible for a human being to perform with identical dynamics. If there is a change in tempo, for example, there is a natural human inclination to react to it on the dynamic level as well. The two seem to be intertwined at times. Often, when there is a crescendo

²⁹⁷ Grossman, 270.

in the music, the pianist's first gut reaction is to play faster, although that may go against what is written in the score. Of course, pianists are rational beings and they are not going to allow their emotions to take them on a wild ride disregarding the composer's indications. However, the fact that such inclinations exist proves a point that there is a bit of natural inspiration/reaction which happens when one performs on stage.

Another way dynamics can be used and manipulated by the artist on stage is by deciding which voices to bring out. The piano, often being a multi-voice, orchestral instrument, has much liberty in determining which melodic line should stand out from the rest of the harmony, if any at all. While when playing a fugue it is easy to know where the subject is and how to voice it, in Romantic music for example, sometimes the choice is left to the performer. There are "traditional" ways of voicing agreed upon by the great pedagogues and players of the past. But, who is to say that this was the only way the composer intended the composition to sound? After all, if the composer wanted to bring out specific notes, he or she would have taken the time to notate them differently, for example with accents or with longer note values.

Voicing, when placed alongside dynamic surges or decrescendos, and rubato in tempi can help create a whole new work, one which the critics, pedagogues and performers of the past, and even the composer, may not have thought to imagine.

There is, however, one more condition which affects performers on stage: the risk of memory. The piano is a unique instrument in which, on top of dealing with stage fright, the nerves that fuel the sense of risk, one must deal with the idea that the safety net of the score does not exist outside the realm of compositions we consider "modern."

The tradition of memorizing music dates back to the Romantic time period. However, during that time performers were still allowed to improvise on stage and have that be considered an acceptable interpretation. Today, pianists are expected to play each note perfectly without memory lapses, and one almost finds him or herself as a spectator in the sport of if the pianist is going to make it to the end of the piece without a mistake or not.

No matter how frightening, the idea of a memory slip can be to the pianist performing it does contribute to the idea of creating a unique piece of music each time a person performs. When professionally trained musicians have a memory lapse, they usually keep going and find creative ways of getting out of their confusion and covering up the mistake. To someone in the audience who has never heard the piece, that particular presentation is how he or she will view it. Therefore, whether critics like it or not, a memory slip can enhance the composition or even create a brand new masterpiece out of the spontaneous improvisation of the performer.

“Performance partakes of the ironies of the human condition,” meaning on one hand, we want our performers to be inspired by an unknown, almost “devilish” force, a source of great virtuosity, while on the other hand, we want them to rationally convey what they are trying to tell us in a way in which it can be understood.²⁹⁸ Audiences want performers to be unique, organic, to “wow” them with their musical talents; at the same time, they want them to be generic enough so that the critics can still assess them as staying true to the tradition.

²⁹⁸ Grossman, 276.

Grossman states that “art is often a commentary on art,” and performance is often a commentary on the already written work.²⁹⁹ He writes of possibly having more “obligation to the new art as to the old, to the work being created by the performer, as to the work of the composer.”³⁰⁰ For example, when a book becomes a movie, the public who watches the movie, whether or not they have read the actual book, differentiates the two. There could be many reasons for this phenomenon: the way the creators of the movie saw what the author described and transcribed it to the screen, the choices they made in keeping or adding certain aspects, and, perhaps most importantly, which actors play which parts and how they portray them. When a movie comments on a novel, it is primarily the actors who are commenting, and so in classical piano playing, it is the pianists who comment on the work, creating a new one. In piano world, this commentary is even stronger because pianists are generally not directed by anybody as to what to do while they are on stage, while actors always have a whole crew following them, directing and assisting. Pianists are, as strange as it sounds, more creatively liberated – they are the lead in a one person show.

As Grossman states, the “double loyalty, to self and to the other, to inner demand and to the outer command, is at the core of ethical existence in its most difficult and hence most meaningful moments.” In other words, while performance ethics rest on moments of decisions of adding personal ideas to the score and taking risks, those moments are most memorable because they bring the artist creating a work as a performer face to face with the composer who created the written score. The

²⁹⁹ Grossman, 276.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 279.

confrontation of the two beings bringing music to the audience is much like a Platonic Idea – the “continuation of search, not the presentation of a settled discovery.”³⁰¹ While somewhere out in the cosmos there may be an ideal form, the composition, the job of the performer is to add the self to the composer’s creation in order to come one step closer to possibly understanding that form. Each pianist will have a different approach to accomplishing this goal, as well as carrying out responsibilities to the combination of centuries of interpretation, perspiration, and self portrayal. Each performance may bring about a true masterpiece – one designed by the composer, brought to life through the performer, and accepted by the audience.

The double responsibility, both to the composer and to the audience, and the choices involved in repertoire, interpretation, and stage presence all contribute to the pianists’ engagement with their art. During the concert, the musical performer commits to revealing freedom to the audience, and the audience, in turn, reacts with their freedom to give the performance meaning.

Abandonment - Stage Fright

Sartre’s idea of *abandonment*, of being alone in the world, is perfectly suited to describe the state one experiences as a performer. Andre Watts said that a “concert is always an incredible exposition of one’s daring and insides.”³⁰² Stage fright is not really a fear of the stage itself. No one is afraid of playing the piano on an empty stage in an empty hall. Stage fright is the result of the apprehension of *others*. It is our apprehension of *being-for-others*. When we perform, we are conscious of the fact that others are

³⁰¹ Grossman, 280.

³⁰² Mach, *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1991), 372.

looking at us. Through their *look*, we believe them to be qualifying, judging, and projecting only one possibility onto us. We apprehend them as defining us and imprisoning us into our role as pianists. In such a role, as a being which performs the piano, we are expected to fulfill certain obligations. We believe that we are expected to perform well and to only be viewed as performers regardless of whatever other roles we may play in life, as well as whatever other thoughts and interests we may have. This automatically restrains our freedom.

As we apprehend ourselves as performing only one role, it is very easy to fall into *bad faith*. We can try too hard to fulfill our role, but in the process we forget to add ourselves, or our unique interpretation, to the performance. As an aside, it is also possible to fall into the *bad faith* of assuming one mode of interpretation and always reverting to it, regardless of the composition being performed. We can also try to detach ourselves from this role by trying to escape the situation we are in while daydreaming of different times and places. Both projects inevitably fail. The former fails, because it takes the performer's point of view out of the performance and music, thus sounding mechanical and uninspired. The latter fails, because by completely trying to avoid the situation, the performer has no control over his or her body and, most likely musical and technical mistakes will occur. However, we must remember that the audience is not necessarily objectifying us; we think that they are, and those two ideas are different.

Sartre believes emotions are a magical behavior of the consciousness in response to a situation it can not change.³⁰³ Therefore, stage fright is a state one puts oneself into in order to react to the situation of being judged by others. However, there is a solution

³⁰³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory in Essays in Existentialism* (New York: Citadel Press, 1993), 232.

to this issue. Instead of aiming to escape one's *facticity* and situation through fear, the performer should embrace the moment and cast him or herself into the world of the stage and realize the "irreversibility of time." Live performance is a perfect opportunity to feel the adventure of time passing and of the moment which the pianist can never have back because the performer only has a single chance.³⁰⁴ Live performance is an opportunity to be spontaneous, to take full advantage of one's freedom.

Another aspect of the performance, the presence of the *other*, is the previously described sense of responsibility both to composer and to the audience member. The composer, as one who relies on the performer's *being-for-others* to transfer the message, and the audience, who only knows the performer's interpretation of the piece, are all anxiously awaiting the performer's delivery of the message. The college student also has the expectations of teachers, another large burden to bear. Finally, other students, who also came to learn and, at some level, criticize the concert, are also in the audience. The student must illuminate the composer's compositions, the teacher's pedagogical advices, personal interpretive decisions, and audience expectations – leading to a great amount of responsibility or *anguish*.

The performer not only realizes the presence of the other, but the performer also comes face to face with personal freedom – thus experiencing *anguish*. In *anguish*, the pianist realizes that nothing is preventing him or her from making mistakes, experiencing a memory lapse, from improvising and rewriting the composition, from changing the program of the concert, from going against interpretative suggestions of teachers and

³⁰⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, Trans. Lloyd Alexander, (New York: New Directions, 2007), 57.

colleagues, or from getting up and walking off the stage, etc. Therefore, no matter how constrained a pianist may feel in preparation for a performance (i.e. through responsibilities to the audience, composer, teacher), all walls are removed once on stage, and the pianist is faced with freedom and personal choices. Whether the freedom leads to a great or a bad performance remains to be determined, but one may be certain that *anguish* will always accompany the pianist onto the stage.

All of the aspects described may lead one to acquire a grim view of the idea of performance. However, as described at the beginning of this chapter, performance is an engagement, a conversation with the audience, and while the audience is an other *looking* at the performer, the audience is also the person who came to hear the freedom of the performer and liberate his or her own emotional baggage. We think the audience is objectifying us through their *look*, but that is our impression; they may actually be supporting our freedom and listening to our message. Focusing on the conversational and communicational aspect of the performance experience may help the pianist, and especially the student pianist, to overcome performance anxiety. The idea of engaging the community and of performing at venues outside of the concert halls (i.e. retirement homes) can also serve as a great opportunity to try out one's program in front of a supportive audience and help the pianist have a sense of connection to the listener (e.g. through talking to the audience about the music or simply meeting them), which he or she could then transfer into the larger concert hall setting.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed Sartre's writings about the idea of engagement and committed art and applied it to music performance. Through the encounter of the pianist with the audience, and the realizations of the original choices of the performer, human freedom is awakened in the audience member, therefore replying to Sartre's call for "transferring freedom"³⁰⁵ into music.

This chapter also addressed the question of responsibility and its application to music interpretation – the responsibility to the composer and to the audience member who came to hear the performer present the composition in a new light, creating a new work of art as a result.

The final section of the chapter focused on *abandonment*, and how this idea could apply particularly to being alone on stage and feeling *anguish* due to both the responsibility to composer, audience, teachers and colleagues and, at the same time, the realization of complete freedom the pianist has as a solo performer. While the performer believes the audience member may be *looking* at them, the pianist also has the unique opportunity to share freedom with the listeners through an engaged conversation, helping the audience to liberate their emotions and, at the same time, allowing the performer to overcome performance anxiety.

³⁰⁵ Sartre, *Situations*, 222.

CHAPTER VI

PIANO TEACHERS IN A HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SETTING

In order to properly assess the work of piano professors in higher education, it is necessary to establish the setting in which they conduct their work, and describe the many various roles they play as a part of their duties. This chapter will focus on the expert opinions and suggestions of several well-known pedagogues of the past and present about the subject of teaching music, as well as the observations and knowledge they have gathered through research and practice regarding life in the field of music and academia. Sartre's philosophy, described in Chapter IV, will be applied to demonstrate how his ideas are exhibited in the writings of professional piano teachers.

Piano Teacher as Advisor and Mentor: Love and Responsibility

“In fashioning myself, I fashion man.”³⁰⁶

One of the responsibilities of the teachers on the college level is to help the student enter the music profession by guiding them, by giving academic and career advice, and by being an exemplar musician, music teacher, administrator, and performer. As Sartre said, in fashioning self-conduct the piano teacher really makes a statement

³⁰⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Basic Writings* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 30.

about what is the standard conduct of all others in the profession. Most importantly, the professor is setting an example for the student, who will also one day be a teacher.³⁰⁷

The original meaning of the word “pedagogy” entailed leading or accompanying the student on the path to knowledge.³⁰⁸ The student-teacher relationship on the collegiate level is one of “co-participants” in artistic growth. The teacher performs, rehearses and practices alongside the student.³⁰⁹ College professors often spend much time in their piano studios outside of teaching. There they practice, rehearse chamber music, work on their research, and hold office or advising hours. The teacher’s studio is the one place where the student can find support amidst their sense of *abandonment*. Since piano is a solo instrument, piano students often feel alone in the world, and having a teacher who is also alone working in a studio in the same building can be a sense of great comfort and motivation.

The teacher creates an awareness of the musical society in which the student lives.³¹⁰ The teacher introduces the student to the students’ *being-for-others*, as exhibited by networking with others, to the *facticity* of being a pianist and to the general reality of the music world. This is important not only for musical or interpretative purposes; it is also important in helping the student find professional teaching and performing opportunities.

³⁰⁷ Heinrich Neuhaus., *The Art of Piano Playing*, trans. K.A. Leibovitch (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 203.

³⁰⁸ Max van Manen, *The Tact of Teaching* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 38.

³⁰⁹ Bauer, 212.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 214.

Teachers have a plethora of ways in which their influence can impact a student. The interaction can lead from a friendship to a counseling session. Whether the guidance of a college professor is institutionally recognized and considered official on the student's transcript, or whether it is one created unofficially, the responsibility to guide the student on the musical career path often rests with the private piano teacher. Many college students have a tendency to "idolize" their teachers, even when they are not playing official roles of being mentees.³¹¹

Similar to Sartre's description of love, students often admire their teachers and the teachers become the point of reference for everything else in the world. Students feel their musical existence justified when they are complimented by the teacher. However just as the project of love fails, it is also very easy for the student and teacher to objectify each other through *looking* at each other, or through having other students, faculty or administrators *look* at both teacher and pupil with external evaluating criteria.

Teachers ideally will empathize with their students, and students in turn will trust themselves to their professors, who will guide them as they are cruising the highway of knowledge through mentorship based upon "caring, love and concern," while fostering the students' "respect and trust."³¹² Ideally, a teacher will respect the student's freedom to choose while at the same time make the pupil aware of the responsibilities each career decision entails and the fact that each given situation will still have the presence of the *existential lack*. It is up to the student to decide how to confront it.

In the end, career development examples and advices of professors resonate strongly in the minds of students because the goal of all teachers is to eventually inspire

³¹¹ Bauer, 99.

³¹² Ibid., 43.

their students to gain independence, to become artists, to end their student status, to break the attachment, to develop their own unique voice on the instrument, and even possibly reach higher and achieve more than their teachers.³¹³ And, the future generations may also benefit from advice given because students will pass down what they have learned or observed to their pupils.³¹⁴

Outside of the unofficial guidance role often assumed by professors, there is the official role assigned to many piano professors of being the student's academic advisor. In this capacity, the teacher is actually responsible for advising the pupil's academic career at the institution. The teacher helps the student figure out when and which classes to take, oversees special projects, such as recitals, and monitors general degree progress. Inevitably, these decisions directly or indirectly affect the professional life and preparation of the student and play a role in his or her development as a musician, performer, and as a possible future teacher and member of academia.

Students are supposed to follow the advice of their assigned advisors. Unfortunately, sometimes teachers believe they have to follow criteria set by external academic forces and do not base their opinion on evaluating what is in the student's best interest.³¹⁵ Advisors may even sometimes dictate what students have to do,³¹⁶ even when students may have other options and personal ideas of what is best for them. Some teachers even permanently break with students for "exhibiting too much

³¹³Jorgensen, 184.

³¹⁴Uszler, 385.

³¹⁵ Jorgensen, 184.

³¹⁶Bernstein, 184.

independence.”³¹⁷ Often, because the faculty and administration work together to keep the level of the school balanced and to prevent conflicts from arising, such decisions may even involve administrators themselves delivering ultimatums to students.³¹⁸ Such actions aim to hide the fact that the student is alone and *abandoned* and to constantly tell the student what to do ultimately does not help him or her. Each pupil needs to make life and career decisions alone because taking responsibility for the road chosen seems more practical than to later in life be responsible for the repercussions of a road dictated by someone else. In either case, the student’s choice to follow the lead was still a choice, but it was also a lesson in hiding from freedom.

To be fair, sometimes students criticize their pedagogues without base and hurt the professor’s reputation as well. However, student complaints, especially when the discussion involves one’s academic career, should be investigated with due respect. One thing to consider is, as Thomas Mann said, that teachers are the “personified conscience” of their students, and in the roles of mentors and advisors, teachers can really inspire or discourage students whose confidence already may not be at a high level.³¹⁹ Teachers also serve as mirrors of their students. As Sartrean *others*, teachers paint a picture or reflection of the student which the student may not have drawn, but of which the pupil is aware and for which he or she is responsible.³²⁰

³¹⁷ Rezits, 47.

³¹⁸ Bernstein, 174.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 489.

³²⁰ *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), 475.

While the role of the advisor may or may not be defined in the institution's handbooks, the unofficial role of the mentor is one which is created and developed through the interaction between teacher and student. As such, there can be no rules to follow. The only guidelines may be to help students engender the independence of thought and judgment,³²¹ to prepare them for the countless demands of the career in music,³²² to impart upon them the knowledge and advice detrimental in gearing for the professional life, and to do so while setting high expectations, while at the same time acting with mutual respect, support, care, empathy, and encouragement.³²³ In other words, the mentor should help the mentee see the choices available, and come to face with the *anguish* which comes with making a choice.

While bearing in mind that any strict definition of a role will limit the student's potential to grow and flourish, it is also important to remember the danger that performing a specific role may have for the professor. If a teacher becomes overzealous in trying to uphold either the part of a cheerleader, or of the stern reminder of the dark reality of survival amongst the competition, there is a risk of formulating a strict and binding role. The teacher may run the risk of being in Sartrean *bad faith* – of playing out the assumed role, giving out the same advice, and reaffirming the same approach, no matter what the student needs in a particular situation.

Even if the teacher chooses to become uninvolved and ignore the responsibility to guide, this is also a choice. Often the teacher's choice to ignore the freedom to make a

³²¹ Uszler, 63.

³²² Ibid., 254.

³²³ Jorgensen, 68.

decision and advise the student will be understood on the part of the student as an example of continuing to hide from freedom in life and career, a decision which removes the teacher from taking ownership and responsibility for his or her own life and actions and sets a poor example.

**Teacher as Judge:
Responsibility, Existential Lack, and Freedom**

College piano teachers often have the task of evaluating the progress of their students. They are charged with measuring the pupils' progress during piano lessons, toward degree completion, their exams or juries, recitals, and their special projects such as theses. These evaluations start before the student even enters the institution. Piano teachers attend the auditions and often decide who is accepted into their studio. This is one of the most important meetings for the student/teacher relationship because often it is the only chance they have to decide whether or not they are compatible with each other.

During the audition, teachers may hope for a sincere demonstration of the student's abilities. However, often times, such is not the case.³²⁴ As a result students who are unprepared are accepted into programs where they struggle to meet the requirements, feel frustrated, and possibly give up the dream of a music career, something which could have been avoided if the sole judgment of their readiness for the program was based upon more than just the brief ten to fifteen minute audition.³²⁵ The audition pieces are usually rehearsed for an entire year or more, and therefore, their deliverance to the jury is often

³²⁴ Uszler, (Gordon), 255.

³²⁵ Bernstein, 181.

flawless.³²⁶ However, the audition is not representative of the progress students may make when they are in the college environment, with more rigorous expectations of both the number and the difficulty of musical compositions they are required to cover in a limited amount of time.

Having a narrow opinion of the student due to the limited amount of interaction during the audition can be remedied with the possibility of also having a one on one interview. The teacher will get to know the person behind the student and vice versa.³²⁷ Since the student and teacher are in such close contact for their weekly lessons, their personality can be as equally important as their professional qualifications.³²⁸ When pupils and faculty members are mismatched, sometimes nothing will help them overcome the antipathy they may feel and which can affect them academically, as well as artistically and musically.³²⁹ Of course, in a situation where the two can choose each other, such unpleasant experiences can be avoided altogether.³³⁰

It would also be beneficial for the student to have the opportunity to meet with some of the professor's students and possibly even hear them play. It would be wise to recommend the student listen to the recordings, or if possible, live concert performance of the teacher. In this way, the student knows what to expect from the faculty member on the personal and professional level.

³²⁶ Bernstein, 180.

³²⁷Uszler, 19.

³²⁸Bernstein, 57.

³²⁹Jorgensen, 45.

³³⁰Ibid., 184.

While teachers audition students, it may be a great practice for students to also audition teachers. Today, during college preparation, many pupils already take lessons from teachers before they officially audition to the school. Most students do so to have an informal audition and to see if the teacher is willing to consider them for entrance into their studio. However, this technique should also be used to see if the student and teacher are compatible from the student's point of view as well. In other words, students should go "teacher shopping" or "mutual auditioning."³³¹ Under these conditions, both parties feel that they are making the choice to study with one another, and it places the burden of responsibility to the commitment of the relationship also on the student, not just the teacher. Professor Seymour Bernstein of New York University even requires several days as a waiting day period between the lesson and the time the decision is made. He then asks the student to contact and let him know about whether or not the student feels they will work well together. After the student voices his or her opinion, Bernstein then relays his thoughts about the possibility of them working together; if both parties agree, then they establish the student and teacher collaboration.³³² The author of this paper had the privilege of having such a lesson and can attest to the success of this practice.

Regardless of the method of the student and teacher interaction during or prior to the audition process, once the teacher accepts the student, the pupil becomes the teacher's responsibility. It is important to remember that the professor chose to accept the student into the studio, and having done so, he or she must engage in the pupil's development.

Having passed the audition and began study with a particular teacher, the student is continuously criticized and assessed. The important thing to keep in mind is that the

³³¹ Bernstein, 62.

³³² Ibid., 62.

pupil's musical and personal identity are often intertwined, and judgments about the former will inevitably reflect the views of the latter.³³³ Often teachers forget that the person is always behind the student, and although they are evaluating the musical output, the person is the producer of the music, and sometimes, when under criticism, it is really hard to separate the two. To treat the student only as a person who is studying the piano means assigning one specific role and imprisoning the student in it. It encourages the student to have a narrow view of self, as encompassing only one role, and to fall into *bad faith*.

Teachers can objectively judge only the final products of the students' work.³³⁴ However, they may never know the true extent of the effect the education had on the pupil and how it will be exhibited later on in life and music.³³⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to be very careful in assumptions about motives, or attempts, because inaccurate evaluations can be "demoralizing."³³⁶ As teachers interact with students, the teacher may only know one role the student plays in life – that of learning a particular subject. However, the student has many roles and responsibilities in life, and making assumptions about the student as a whole based on one aspect of their being is dangerous.

An existential piano teacher would allow the student to create means of evaluating work.³³⁷ Since an inevitable part of the evaluation process is to be faced with the *look* of the teacher, a *look* which automatically reduces the student to viewing him or herself as

³³³ Bernstein, 60.

³³⁴ Jorgensen, 63.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

³³⁷ Bauer, 214.

an object, having the student create the standard may allow the student to focus on the work and not on the process of being objectively seen. Since evaluation criteria directly influences the judgment which follows, having the student take an active part in the criteria of evaluation may change the professor's point of view, shed some light on student actions or products, and perhaps change the students grade or the teacher's grading standards. The student also knows what areas need improvement, and having the evaluation set by the person who needs it the most, the student being evaluated, may actually cause the greatest amount of improvement and learning to take place.

The Rogerian method of learning, similar to the existential approach, allows the student "freedom to pursue the goals of choice and the responsibility in fulfilling them," using the teacher as a "resource" toward achieving the goals selected by the student.³³⁸ A case study using the Rogerian method in piano instruction at a higher educational setting proved successful – its subjects experienced more progress than when using the traditional piano teaching methods.³³⁹

Since criticism is an inevitable part of the music study experience, a view of criticism which "requires an awareness of a person's positive accomplishments and an intellectual and compassionate understanding of his or her faults"³⁴⁰ seems to be most effective. As beings with an *existential lack*, we are always aware of what is missing from a situation or from a complete student project or performance. This, due to our *nothingness*, causes us to negatively criticize the work presented. Whereas, a teacher

³³⁸ Charlotte Kroeker, "The Application of the Rogerian Theory of Learning to the Teaching of Piano in a Higher Educational Setting" (PhD diss., Kansas State University, 1981),50.

³³⁹ Ibid., 52.

³⁴⁰ Bernstein, 490.

may sometimes make a sarcastic comment or a joke on the spur of the moment, students may remember the remark even long after they study with the teacher.³⁴¹

A critical evaluation of the student's work needs to be complete, "over-conscientious," and time consuming for the teacher, because it is really the only way to respect the pupil as an individual and to respect the work with due attention.³⁴² While the subject matter of piano playing is the same, the pupils being taught are distinctly unique. Students are individuals, who are always developing, never determined, separated from what they are by a *nothingness*, and using the same critical standard to evaluate them creates a major disservice to all.

Sadism and Masochism

While being a teacher, one may encounter difficult situations, ones which test the boundaries of the teacher's patience. Patience is a virtue, and it is the ability to not give up or lose self-control when a student is not grasping a concept. To lose self-control in front of the student no matter how frustrating the situation may be, means risking his or her trust as well.³⁴³ Students view teachers as guides leading them through the difficult world of learning piano performance both physically, mentally and psychologically, and true leaders are expected to not let their followers feel forsaken during their struggles.³⁴⁴

³⁴¹ Christine Anne Brown, "A Humane Approach to Private Piano Instruction: An Analysis and Application of the Ideas of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Jerome Bruner" (D.M.E. diss., Indiana University, 2000), 263.

³⁴² Jorgensen, 70.

³⁴³ Ibid., 48.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 49.

There are numerous examples of teachers losing control in front of their pupils, and the psychological damage such approaches had on the pupils as a result.³⁴⁵ There are teachers who thrive on the “web of self-destructiveness” in which they have entangled their students.³⁴⁶ Sometimes pupils who study with these sadistic teachers even lie about their experiences with them, because students naturally want to trust their teachers and idolize them, and it is hard to have an idol who is a monster.³⁴⁷ In the end, these teachers become, as Sartre’s says, instruments of pain.

Beloved Tyranna is a collection of memories of studies with Isabella Vengerova. While Vengerova was known for her technique which helped pianists achieve a beautiful tone, she was equally as well known for her teaching methods and her temper. In the book, her students, who admired and respected her musical knowledge and dedication to the art of piano playing, also spoke about their ambivalent view of her personally due to her teaching philosophy. Her studio was based on the “my way” approach: there was no discussion or exchange of ideas, it was her way, or the student had to find another teacher.³⁴⁸ She never adjusted her pedagogical approach to the personality or needs of the students. She terrified her pupils to the point of physical and psychological illness. Her “tyrannical disciplinarian”³⁴⁹ pedagogical techniques even resulted in physical

³⁴⁵ Rezits, 56.

³⁴⁶ Bernstein, 10.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 159.

³⁴⁸ Rezits, 121.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 103.

outbursts of violence, such throwing statues at students, reaping and stamping on sheet music,³⁵⁰ and even taking and breaking a chair.³⁵¹

Vengerova also controlled the students' musical lives. She did not allow her students to play for other teachers or even play in student recitals unless she felt they were ready.³⁵² When Joseph Rezits, a pupil of Vengerova, wanted to compete in the Philadelphia Orchestra Youth Auditions, she forbade him. He entered the competition and won.³⁵³ Later he called to invite her to the concert. She replied with a letter telling him to "have courage," implying that he will surely need it.³⁵⁴ Rezits also had fourteen lessons on the F minor *Ballade* of Chopin. However, even after all of those lessons, Vengerova still refused to allow him to perform it on the Curtis student recital.³⁵⁵ She was also upset when students decided to make personal decisions, such as going to college or having children.³⁵⁶ Always scaring students into believing they were honored to study with her and that they were always on probation, pending being thrown out of her studio, she had no reservations about parting with students who she deemed untamable.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁰ Rezits, 107.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 47.

³⁵² Ibid, 127.

³⁵³ Ibid., 30.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 31.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 127.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 67.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 124

Seymour Bernstein, a former Vengerova student, tried everything to learn her technique.³⁵⁸ Unable to come to terms with her teaching philosophy, he left her studio, and transferred to another teacher.³⁵⁹ After watching him successfully perform as the soloist with an orchestra and hearing the great compliments given to him by her colleagues, Vengerova went to the director of Mannes School of Music and declared that either Bernstein “leave the school” or she will leave. Bernstein was asked to leave the conservatory not to hurt Vengerova’s pride at having been rejected by a student.³⁶⁰

Isabelle Vengerova is a great example of someone who perhaps chose to take away freedom from her students, because her own freedom was taken away from her during her career decisions and her subsequent piano studies. She told one of her students she really wanted to be an actress, but since that dream was not possible, she chose the piano instead.³⁶¹ She admitted that during her own piano studies with Leschetizky “her knees shook,” and that every lesson was a “terrible ordeal.”³⁶² This establishes Sartrean idea of responsibility in action, fashioning of the future generations. Perhaps Vengerova had such a strict teaching philosophy, because this is how she herself was taught. We may never know the true motivations of her terrifying pedagogical approach, but it does serve as a great contrast to the idea of existential piano pedagogy.

All of the examples of judgment listed so far are done in the privacy of the student’s lesson. There are of course, more severe examples of evaluation, such as

³⁵⁸ Bernstein, 165

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 170.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 174.

³⁶¹ Rezits, 10.

³⁶² Ibid., 79.

formal grades during juries and recitals. Grades have an even stronger psychological impact on the student, because they are in the realm of the public sphere. There, the student perceives the *look* as magnified for all to see, adding to the criticism.

Freedom

An existential teacher allows students to take part in the setting of curriculum or method, and evaluation of student performance and progress. Therefore, both teacher and student are involved in monitoring the pupil's improvements, or areas which need more attention. This could be done through the use of audio and visual recordings.³⁶³ The student could not only evaluate his or her playing audibly, but also watch the performance and in a way be a self-teacher. Since the person performing always hears the performance differently from the person who is just listening, there may be aspects of the playing the student can point out, which the teacher is not aware of due to having a different point of view. The teacher can then address what may cause those problems, which in turn can help the improvement of other areas. This kind of Socratic dialogue, used to ask and know what the student actually heard, saw, or thought about his or her playing, would not only lead to the student's improvements in self-criticism and potential teaching endeavors, but will also help strengthen the student-teacher relationship, since both parties respectfully acknowledge and value each other's freedom and opinion.

The creative collaboration between teacher and student should also be extended to the realm of artistic independence and musical interpretation, and the teacher should

³⁶³ Bauer, 214.

inquire about the student's vision of a particular composition. Knowing what the pupil's artistic goals are will help the professor aid the student in the attainment of those goals. Students who were a part of the study applying Rogerian method to piano teaching stated they had a stronger musical commitment, a higher feeling of self-confidence, felt a stronger degree of responsibility for their work, and were able to find means of self-expression.³⁶⁴ In other words, having the student and teacher both involved in the planning of the student's course of private piano study and in the evaluation of that course allowed the students to have more of an artistic stance in their music, confidence in performance, and responsibility or ownership of the final product. The teacher, in a dialogue with the student, is able to help him or her achieve independence, and to reach musical maturity and mastery.³⁶⁵ Someday, the student will be learning unknown repertoire, or modern music, and if the pupil does not have enough of a unique artistic conviction, he or she will not be able to interpret the composition. It is also interesting to note that studies have shown that students who are allowed to choose their own repertoire are more motivated to practice.³⁶⁶

The teacher should be aware of the constant presence of the *look* between the self and the student. Since the *look* is inevitable in human relations, the teacher must revert to assessing the means of addressing the student tactfully. To act tactfully means to preserve the student's space,³⁶⁷ to know when not to interfere with the student's freedom.

³⁶⁴ Kroecker, 53.

³⁶⁵ Neuhaus, 172.

³⁶⁶ Estelle R. Jorgensen, "Aspects of Private Piano Teacher Decision Making in London, England," *Psychology of Music* 14, no. 2 (1986): 122.

³⁶⁷ Van Manen, 163.

It also means to help the student overcome feelings of insecurity³⁶⁸ and memories of past traumatic performance experiences. If the student knows the teacher is also interested in leaving the bad performance experience in the past, then he or she can exercise personal freedom and not be the past anymore. Finally, a teacher can tactfully enhance the pupil's uniqueness,³⁶⁹ whether it be in interpretation, choice of repertoire, or stage presence. Instead of trying to make the student into a copy of everyone else, the teacher can guide the student on a path to change and improve the world of classical performance.

It is important to remember that communication does not only happen with words or with the *look*; communication also happens with silence, with gestures, and through being a living example.³⁷⁰ For example, if the student has a negative performing experience and instead of talking to the student about it, the teacher pretends as if nothing happened but, at the same time, spends the entire lesson shaking his or her head, as if a mistake during a concert is the end of the world; the message is the same as if the teacher actually addressed the student verbally. Even if the teacher does not address a specific incident, the instructor's lack of acknowledgement, avoidance of the problem, and *bad faith* in regards to the situation, set an example for the student.

When a teacher has a frustrating moment, it may be good to remember the moments of enthusiasm this teacher has shared with the student. There are moments when teachers and students discover things together, learn from each other, inspire each other, and set and accomplish tasks which at first seem beyond their reach.³⁷¹ At those

³⁶⁸ Van Manen, 166.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 169.

³⁷⁰ Ibid, 176, 181, 185.

times, the teacher and student discover their empathy, care and concern toward each other, and those moments make the frustrations seem minuscule.³⁷² It is important to know that both students and teacher are not ends, or objects, they are still to be determined, and, therefore, focusing on one particular encounter is not a just way of establishing a view of the relationship. It is also important to ask the student about what may be causing agitation in any situation. A study investigating aspects of the student-teacher relationship during piano lessons found that teachers who asked their students to voice their opinion about why the relationship is not working usually received a clear response, and both parties collaborated to change the situation and improve their interaction.³⁷³

Sometimes it may be better to advise the student to seek outside help by playing for other teachers³⁷⁴ or by switching teachers³⁷⁵ than to continue in an environment where both parties feel anxious about their relationship and musical progress. After all, since a teacher is only one person who cannot possibly know everything, seeking outside opinions may strengthen the relationship and trust between the professor and pupil.³⁷⁶ In the end, the student is *abandoned* in the world to make decisions, and if the relationship between student and teacher is not working and is not helping the project of realization of freedom, it may be better to switch to another teacher, affirming the possibility of choice.

³⁷¹ Jorgensen, *The Art of Teaching*, 52.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 51.

³⁷³ Jorgensen, "Aspects of Private Piano Teacher Decision Making in London, England," 125.

³⁷⁴ Bernstein, 60.

³⁷⁵ Jorgensen, *The Art of Teaching*, 49.

³⁷⁶ Bernstein, 60.

By ignoring choice, the student and teacher will both suffer in *bad faith*, avoiding the necessity of the decision and persecuting each other with their resentful *looks*.

Method – Bad Faith

While this study does not concern itself with the technical approaches to piano teaching, it is important to acknowledge the element of choice in transferring technical knowledge from instructor to student. Since the teacher and artist are one and the same person in piano teaching,³⁷⁷ and since both art and teaching have an element of the technique and inspiration, it is necessary to address how the practical aspects of teaching are incorporated into the art of guiding future musicians.

As with the teaching of music and the making of music, the performing of music requires an element of the practical and theoretical, as well as the imaginative and creative.³⁷⁸ Therefore, it is necessary to find ways of addressing the practical without suppressing the creative. As teachers, a part of the task is energizing the students' imagination, or the "creative will."³⁷⁹ However, teachers often refer to specific, non-adjustable, methods for achieving this task.

Some teachers choose to ignore and not address problems of technique at all due to lack of interest or knowledge in the area.³⁸⁰ It could be that they are performers who do not know how to teach or teachers who are bored or "burned out" and lack concern for

³⁷⁷Jorgensen, 211.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 212.

³⁷⁹ Neuhaus, 196.

³⁸⁰ Bernstein, 180.

developing the aspects of musical knowledge they believe the students should already know before entering college.

However, there are teachers who take this to an extreme and apply rigorous technical approaches to all of their students, regardless of age, physical stature, or emotional state. Isabelle Vengerova, for example, had a system of moving the wrist a certain way when playing the keyboard, and all of her students had to spend a sufficient amount of time at the beginning of their studies learning that particular method of “down-ups,” regardless of how they played before they came to her.³⁸¹

If students had pain while using the technique, she blamed it on outside forces, such as carrying of books, but never suggested they adjust her approach to piano playing.³⁸² Vengerova taught younger students with the same technical and psychological approach as her older students. She taught children as well as adults into their late thirties.³⁸³ She was so committed to her system that she did not even realize when her students ignored her instructions. One student spent the summer practicing raising his fingers and playing percussively, which completely contradicted her method. When he came back the following fall, she complimented him on his improvements that she attributed to her technique, which he disobeyed.³⁸⁴

It is more appropriate to avoid dogmatism when approaching technique and adjust to the individual student. It is interesting to note that while Vengerova was strict in her approach to technique, her students modified it in their teaching and adapted it to the

³⁸¹ Bernstein, 165.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 167.

³⁸³ Rezits, 21.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

individual students' needs.³⁸⁵ It is also worth noting that Vengerova's teacher, Leschetizky believed that since every hand is different, and every pupil learns differently; technique should not be taught by a single method. He "studied the individuality of his pupil," and had a different method for every one of them.³⁸⁶ He strongly spoke out against the concept of a "rigid pedagogical method."³⁸⁷

Technique pedagogy not only incorporates what one does on the piano with his or her fingers, but should also encompass the entire musician, with the student's entire physical attributes. A part of piano teaching involves being aware of the students' posture, as well as their psychological and mental states in order to properly address their connection to the instrument.³⁸⁸ Sometimes teachers are so caught up in creating a self-fulfilling prophecy out of their technical approach to the piano that they forget that those factors are equally as important. A student with smaller hands has different technical problems on the keyboard than a student with larger hands. A student with a longer torso has a different approach to the keyboard than someone who has a shorter torso and perhaps longer legs.

One student, for example, discovered years after studying with Vengerova that the reason he was having difficulty performing a specific musical composition was due to his short torso and long upper arms. She would even tell him to lower his shoulders,

³⁸⁵ Rezits, 163.

³⁸⁶ Uszler, 321.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 320.

³⁸⁸ Jorgensen, 202.

without understanding that this was a reaction to not having his arms on the same level as the keyboard due to not raising his piano bench high enough.³⁸⁹

Having a student play the instrument in an uncomfortable and unnatural manner could hinder his or her learning of the composition and, due to the physical problems, can also create long-lasting damage to the body.³⁹⁰ Many overuse injuries and undesired sound effects on the piano are due precisely to the improper position of the entire body, not just the fingers, hands or arms. One may not only view teaching as an art, but also the student as a work of art – unique, never finished, always developing and always growing, both mentally and physically.

Teacher as Performer: Responsibility and Abandonment

The teacher, who not only is a critic and a counselor but also a performer, represents a most valuable educational aspect to the pupil.³⁹¹ As a performer, the teacher is in a unique situation. Not only does the teacher experience *anguish* in relation to the responsibility to the audience and composer, but the teacher is also under the constant *look* of the student. The student watches the professor as an example of what a performer could be, and this places an immense amount of responsibility on the instructor's shoulders.

³⁸⁹ Rezits, 137.

³⁹⁰ Brown, 265.

³⁹¹ Neuhaus, 184.

The teacher has a hectic schedule due to obligations of teaching, administrative duties, research, and collaborations with other faculty. Performing can sometimes seem as an impossible task under the conditions of constant time restraint and fatigue.³⁹² However, the teacher can use this as a part of teaching and share his or her schedule with college pupils. Many students have an unrealistic vision of a performing career as one that does not require anything except for practicing. The reality of work, which faculty members perform outside of simply playing the piano, may be a good way to expose students to the realities of the profession.

The teacher can involve the student in artistic activities. One great way of involving the student with the faculty's creative activities, which can be of invaluable artistic and academic interest, is to have the student turn pages for the faculty member during a chamber concert. The student will feel the *abandonment* of the performance situation, since the pupil will also be on stage. The student will also learn of the possible mistakes which happen during a performance, since he or she will see the score. This may help the student have a more realistic idea of the fact that mistakes often happen in live concerts. The student can also attend some rehearsals prior to the concert and have the educational benefit of watching faculty members work together. This would help the student in his or her own collaborative activities and allow the pupil to observe the progress from its beginning stages to the final performance.

Another way the faculty member can involve the students is to practice performing the concert program in front of them. Students are constantly performing in studio classes for practice. It would be very beneficial for them to also hear their teacher's practice performance sessions. It would help the teacher to have a practice, or

³⁹² Ibid., 209.

“dry” run, but it will also demonstrate to the student that having “warm up” concerts is a practice performers continue following long after their student careers. The practice performance of a faculty member may also serve as an interesting way for the student to observe the artistic progress of the teacher in preparation for the concert. As described in Chapter V, performance is not only about playing the notes but also about the body language and unique, spontaneous interpretative decisions. Giving the students an opportunity to observe the creation of the performance in progress may help them in their own concert preparation activities.

Finally, another invaluable aspect of the teacher as a performing artist is the opportunity for the teacher and student to share their experiences as they prepare for concerts. The student is alone on stage and *abandoned* to his or her own devices and it may give the pupil more inspiration and reassurance to know that the teacher is also going through a similar experience. The teacher could share how he or she mentally prepares for the concert, how to practice the days leading up to the concert, what to do on the day of the concert and, finally, how to deal with nerves. While the teacher may mention such strategies as they relate to the student’s well-being as a generalization of what pianists may do, having the teacher actually speak from a personal point of view resonates best with the student, since the student ideally respects and trusts the teacher.

Conclusion

This chapter described the various roles the college piano teacher plays. Existential ideas were used in the description of each of the roles to warn of possible

dangers associated with them. Care was taken to show that each action taken by the teacher will have a permanent imprint on the mind of the student in regards to the field of piano playing, teaching, performing, and the self. The teacher has a great responsibility to the student, and being aware of such responsibility is the first step to helping the student choose his or her path in music. The teacher also has the opportunity to have a unique point of view. Instead of always allowing the *look* of others to frame the self and the student in the *us-subject*, dictating how the student and teacher relationship should be, and dictating the awareness the student should have of him or herself due to the *looks* of the surrounding administration, faculty, and the larger classical music tradition practices, the teacher can choose to adopt a different point of view. The teacher can examine the musical world with a vantage point of a stranger – someone who looks “inquiringly and wonderingly” at the surroundings.³⁹³ The teacher should analyze the surrounding environment instead of submerging, without thought, into the social and musical reality which prevails.³⁹⁴ Having a teacher question the environment and the situation will also set an example for the student of using freedom to improve and progress the classical music world of pedagogy and performance.

As mentioned in Chapter V, the teacher should encourage the student to embrace performance as a conversation between the audience and the performer, as opposed to an event where a student is the condemned, judged by everyone in the concert hall. The teacher should cater the teaching methods based on the needs and emotional, mental, and physical attributes of the particular student. In other words, the teacher can learn if the

³⁹³ Maxine Greene, *Teacher as Stranger* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1973), 267.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 269.

student is a visual or an audible learner and aid in developing the student's strengths and, at the same time, improve his or her weaknesses.

Most importantly, the professor in a higher educational setting must realize the immense amount of authority he or she possesses in the student's eyes, both officially, as an advisor who guides the student's career and gives grades, and unofficially, as someone the pupil admires. The faculty member could use this role to inspire and encourage the student to realize the choices available in interpretation, performance, and life, as well as guide the pupil on the road to independence, the road to becoming an artist.

CHAPTER VII

THE PIANO STUDENT IN A COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

This chapter will explore the various roles which students play as they are pursuing their college piano degree. The organization of the chapter will follow the key elements of Sartre's existential philosophy as outlined in Chapter IV. Examples will be drawn from academic sources and personal experiences of the author.

The Student as Freedom

As a being without an *essence*, the student is always separated from the student's academic role. While a college student is majoring in piano, it is important to remember that piano playing is not the only subject he or she is studying. In order to receive a degree, all of the other academic obligations must be fulfilled as well. The student must learn music theory, musicology, or various other academic, non-musical subjects the university requires. It is important to remember that when the student is taking those classes, he or she is not a pianist but a college student like everyone else. To ignore those other obligations may cause the student not to graduate, or more importantly, it may inhibit him or her from learning invaluable information which the courses can offer.

Another role being played is that of the student. While the student is at a particular studio to learn from the wisdom and experience of a certain teacher, it is important to remember that, once on stage, he or she must surrender the usual student mentality and become a pianist: a performer who needs to be daring, convincing, and

assertive. Therefore, one must remember that while a student is a pupil in the teacher's studio, the goal is the performance, and it is important to refrain from framing the student into only one role. If the pupil sees him or herself as only a student, always being told what to do and not having any confidence, it is unlikely that his or her stage presence and performance will be convincing. Therefore, it is always a great idea to have the student "perform" at the beginning of the lesson – to play through the entire piece. The part of the "mousy little child submitting" work for the teacher's criticism should come later. During the performance, the roles are reversed, and the student is the performer, leader, and the teacher is the follower.³⁹⁵

The *look* of the teacher can objectify the student into only one possibility. For example, the teacher may tell a particular student to pursue teaching instead of performance, because the teacher feels the pupil is not a great performer. Likewise, the teacher can force the student to enter competitions and encourage the pupil to only practice the piano and perform, forcing him or her to avoid other academic duties, because the teacher thinks the pupil is a great performer. Both of these cases damage the student. Not only does this make the student feel very objectified and restricted, and prevents further career possibilities, but it is often an inaccurate assessment of the pupil. The teacher only sees one aspect of the student – the student playing the piano during a lesson. The teacher rarely actually sees the student perform on stage, and almost never observes the student teaching. Therefore, to have such a narrow point of view, and at the same time, frame the student in it is very dangerous. The career of a classical musician

³⁹⁵ Boris Berman, *Notes From The Pianist's Bench* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 207.

requires diverse musical activities. Musicians are expected to be entrepreneurial and versatile, and to concentrate on fostering only one view of the student places him or her at a disadvantage.

Freedom and Bad Faith

1. Choice in Artistic Activities

As an adult confronting freedom, the student realizes personal autonomy of choice. In the piano studio, sometimes so much attention is given to working and learning pieces under time constraints that it is very easy to overlook the idea of choice altogether. As described in Chapter V, performers face many choices when preparing for and giving a concert. The student has the same choices available but often, in *bad faith*, attempts to hide behind the teacher in making them.

The student must realize that eventually there will no longer be a teacher, and the pupil will have to face freedom and commit to certain decisions. Ideally, the instructor's guidance in the present can be applied to future situations when the student is *abandoned* to his or her own devices.³⁹⁶ It is important for the student to think about the future in the present, because by avoiding decisions, it becomes easier and easier to fall into *bad faith*, and avoid thinking about freedom and choice.

Two important aspects of piano playing are choice of repertoire and interpretation. While it is assumed that students will study standard repertoire in preparation for their own teaching, as well as performance opportunities when they are asked to play specific pieces, college students should begin thinking about what kind of

³⁹⁶ Berman, 209.

music they enjoy playing and knowing more about. As a university music student, the pianist is exposed to musicology and theory courses, all of which contribute to the student's understanding of the broad field of music. If a student is interested in studying works traditionally not in the classical performance canon, such as works by female composers or contemporary music, the pupil should mention this to the teacher and pursue the interest. Since there are plenty of pianists performing the standard repertoire, exploring alternative routes may actually help the students' sense of independence and lead to greater career marketability. Since most traditional repertoire has a traditional view of interpretation which follows, exploring works which are not as overplayed may offer creative opportunities for the pupil.

The second aspect of choice in piano studies is interpretation. While in college, the student is being graded even during recitals. However, some aspects of even the most commonly played classical pieces are open for the performer to discover. Therefore, it is imperative that the student not hide behind the role of being told what to do and confront the choices available. Eventually, when he or she is a professional musician, those decisions will still need to be addressed, but it will be harder to make them because the pupil would have been hiding from freedom for so long. One can only imagine what the world of music would be like if such interpretations as those of Glenn Gould and Martha Argerich were not allowed to flourish.

2. Choice in Career Path

The final and most important aspect of freedom involved in piano studies are career decisions. Many college students fall into the *bad faith* of believing that they will earn their degree and magically receive a job which they enjoy. Or, even worse, students are under the impression that they will have a successful performing career, which alone will support their livelihood. Some students expect their teacher to push them into a career path. All of this is ignoring their responsibility and the *anguish* of choice. Students should be exploring the various career avenues on their own so that they will know which way to direct their studies.

For example, students should experiment with teaching, since this is a very commonly pursued career path. During their own piano studies with their professors, as prospective teachers, they should begin asking pedagogical questions about their music (e.g. what is the level of this piece, how would you approach teaching it to a younger student, what sections need more attention, what technical/musical aspects of piano playing does it feature). Of course, all of the pedagogical suggestions may help the student learn the piece as well, but they also provide knowledge which can be used to teach next generations of pianists.

Another possible career path may be one of someone interested in competitions. The student should research the various competitions available, look at repertoire lists, and bring all of this information to the lesson to discuss how the student's study that

semester or year can be structured to aid him or her in applying for a particular competition.

On a graduate level, students sometimes participate in professional conferences and present papers and lecture recitals. The student may be focusing on a specific topic, such as a specific sonata of a composer, and it would be very beneficial to bring this to the lesson and discuss it with the teacher. Even if the student is not performing the piece on a degree recital or jury, having the possibility of sharing it with the professor or perhaps even in studio class will prove as an invaluable experience and, in the long run, may help the student attain an academic faculty position through the networking opportunities and connections made at the conference.

Another career avenue is chamber music. Some musicians who have great management skills have started their own concert series or festivals and, through collaborations with others and networking, have made careers out of performing on their own terms.³⁹⁷ The student may think about organizing a concert and learn what kinds of skills and time requirements such an undertaking entails. This will help the student realize the work of an entrepreneur, manager, stage director, and developer, as well as improve the pupil's marketing abilities. All of these skills are very important in a later musical career.

Regardless of what professional avenue the student is interested in pursuing, it is the pupil's responsibility to realize that a career in music represents an actual choice, and it needs to be thought about early during one's studies. While conducting the research or trying out some career path, students may realize that, for example, they love teaching or

³⁹⁷ Suzanne Gilchrest, "On Being a Professional Musician in NYC," *Pan Pies*, 101, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 9.

they hate public speaking, but regardless, it will help make the decision of what to do after graduation. Students are sometimes so involved in their present academic work that they forget that the real world is waiting.

3. Overuse Injury

Another avenue of *bad faith* is the possibility of an overuse injury. Statistics show that eighty-seven percent of musicians experience some kind of a playing related injury.³⁹⁸ Overuse injuries are very common in piano playing. College is often the first time students have a lot of opportunities during the day to practice because they no longer have to attend school all morning and early afternoon. New pupils also want to make a good impression on their new professor and their new peers. Due to all of these factors, students find themselves in a situation of increased practicing,³⁹⁹ one which may lead to a hand injury. A common mistake for a student with a hand injury is to commit the second type of *bad faith* – avoidance of facing *facticity* or the body. The student pretends that he or she is not the body, and the injury is not really substantial to the overall being, since the pupil is more than just the injured hand. The student attempts to escape thinking about and confronting the problem.

When a student develops a hand injury, often the tendency is to ignore it and hope that it will go away on its own. However, this is rarely the case, and the injury worsens

³⁹⁸ C. Guptill, “Case study: musicians' playing-related injuries,” [www.pudmed.gov, http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18525154?ordinalpos=1&itool=EntrezSystem2.PEntrez.Pubmed.Pubmed_ResultsPanel.Pubmed_DefaultReportPanel.Pubmed_RVDocSum](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18525154?ordinalpos=1&itool=EntrezSystem2.PEntrez.Pubmed.Pubmed_ResultsPanel.Pubmed_DefaultReportPanel.Pubmed_RVDocSum) (accessed March 15, 2009).

³⁹⁹ Center for Arts and Wellness, George Mason University, “Overuse Injury in Musicians” Center for Arts and Wellness, George Mason University, <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/artswellness/overuseinjury.html> (accessed March 9, 2009).

often resulting in permanent damage. The student should discuss the injury with the teacher so that they can together come up with some possible avenues for the student to pursue in order to recover. Also, the teacher needs to make sure the student is aware, that while having an injury he or she should not play the piano or participate in other kinds of similar activities, such as typing on the computer. In our time, due to the use of the internet, e-mail, and typing of all homework assignments, it is not surprising that the rate of hand injuries for musicians is higher than ever. This is another reason why a teacher may not understand the student's hand injury – the teacher may not have had one, because when he or she attended college, the typing requirement was not as prevalent.

The teacher should also discuss with the student what other areas of the pupil's routine could be contributing to the damage. For example, maybe the student is sitting incorrectly (i.e. too low or too high) on the chair, maybe the student's hand position is wrong, or maybe it is a matter of taking frequent breaks in the midst of practicing. Taking breaks as frequently as every half an hour or even more ensures a rest for the muscles used in playing. Regardless of what the solutions may be, after the student seeks help whether from a physical therapist, or the Alexander Technique, or other relaxation and rehabilitation methods, he or she still needs to make changes to the daily routine to ensure that the injury does not return.

The student should discuss all of this with the teacher. The teacher can benefit from the student's findings and help direct other students to sources which may help them, and the pupil will also feel better because the teacher supports him or her through the injury. By actually meeting with the student without playing the piano, the teacher can help console the pupil and also use the time to advise other academic areas. People

often do not think about the fact that hand injuries are not only physical, but they also have a psychological effect. All of the sudden, the student can no longer practice, something which is a part of the daily routine, and that combined with watching others perform and practice results in making the student feel very alone. The student is faced with the anxiety of not knowing the time of the recovery and of possibly having to give up the dream of being a pianist.⁴⁰⁰

It is important to make the student aware of the fact that hand injuries are common and to not let him or her feel crippled. By discussing the injury with the teacher, the student will be able to better cope with the problem and have an easier recovery. By falling into *bad faith* and avoiding the injury discussion, the student is doing a disservice not only to him or herself but to all of the future generations of injured pupils. Instead of setting the precedent of addressing the problem and finding solutions, the student and teacher just pretend it does not exist, making the student's hands not a part of the pupil's being. The overuse will intensify, and the student is in danger of having to stop playing the piano.

Existential Lack and Despair

As an existent with a never ending sense of *lack* and the desire to objectify the self, the student is always aware of future goals and possibilities. In other words, the student is constantly comparing personal development to that of other students and to prominent artists whom the pupil admires. The college environment is often the first

⁴⁰⁰ Center for Arts and Wellness, George Mason University, "Overuse Injury in Musicians" Center for Arts and Wellness, George Mason University, <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/artswellness/overuseinjury.html> (accessed March 9, 2009).

time the student is surrounded by other students pursuing the same goal of piano study, and the sense of competing, of being the object of a *look*, of being compared and criticized always haunts them. The sense of the community of pupils also being judged by the faculty, as the *us-object*, is also ever present in the collegiate setting during studio classes, recitals, juries, and other group performances. One may easily develop the view of self as “I am not good enough to be here.”

In order to escape the pressure which the situation provides, the student may revert to negatively assessing personal work, to lying to the self through *bad faith* about the situation, or to finding other negative means of coping with stress (e.g. drugs, alcohol, etc.). The faculty member and student should discuss the situation and help the student act in *despair*. In other words, focus on the things which the student can presently do to change the situation and not think about the things which are currently unattainable. In this sense, the student will have a positive view of the self, as opposed to trying to compare the self to others or to achieve their standards, which may be impossible for the student at the present moment.

Of course if the student feels he or she needs to try out a specific project, for example like Vengerova's student who wanted to enter the competition, which she forbade,⁴⁰¹ the pupil should be able to use the autonomy of choice and attempt the project. However, if the student realizes that the goals set are too high for the present, the teacher should be there to help him or her cope with the situation so the pupil is not left alone feeling like a failure just because he or she could not succeed at one of the many possibilities during the student's career.

⁴⁰¹ Joseph Rezits, *Beloved Tyranna: The Legend and Legacy of Isabelle Vengerova* (Bloomington, Indiana: David Daniel Music Publications, 1995), 30.

The same ideas can be applied to evaluating performances. Sometimes, students are overly critical in evaluating the final result of their own work. The teacher and the student should work together to have a steady progress leading up to the performance, and then, once the student is *abandoned* on stage, he or she can strive to achieve the best performance by drawing on all of the prior preparation. However, if something happens during the concert, and the performance does not accurately reflect the preparation, the student and teacher should both face the fact that the performance is already in the past, and the student should move forward to achieving a better outcome in the future, because the student is not his or her past but can certainly learn from the experience. The important thing to do, for both student and teacher, is to move forward and not keep rehashing negative experiences.

Anguish

The college environment is a time in many students' lives when they realize their freedom to a full extent. College may be the first time students live away from home in a dorm environment with no one directing their routines, or checking to make sure they finish their assignments on time. Many students embrace this freedom through various social activities, and these activities can sometimes both benefit and harm the students' academic and creative work.

Performing for other students, whether in a studio class setting or informally, can benefit students in their preparation. For example, Vengerova's students performed for each other prior to competitions which she forbade them to enter, providing the support

lacking from their teacher.⁴⁰² Students also have opportunities to attend many classical concerts of other students at the school, as well as visiting artists, and discuss these events with their friends. All of these activities are very important to their artistic development.

However, there are other social events, such as parties, during which students tend to drink too much and endanger their academic progress. Students often do not realize how to balance the social aspects of their college experience with their degree work. Music is something which requires consistent practice and finding the balance between work and relaxation is difficult for some.

Students have issues with time management. Overwhelmed with the amount of school work, and without parents to monitor them college students are in constant *anguish* – nothing is preventing them from skipping their assignments and socializing with their friends. Even when students choose to focus on accomplishing their work, their level of stress does not go away. A survey found that sixty percent of students in graduate school feel hopeless at least once a year, and fifty-four percent are depressed to the point of not being able to function, while ten percent consider suicide.⁴⁰³

Since music requires a regular practice schedule and concerts require a certain kind of routine (e.g. eating, napping, etc.)⁴⁰⁴ to calm the nerves, the importance of time management in the pursuit of a music degree is essential. While someone may “cram” for

⁴⁰² Rezits, 118.

⁴⁰³ Piper Fogg, “Grad-School Blues,” *Chronicle of Higher Education, The Chronicle Review* 55, No. 24: B12.

⁴⁰⁴ Marianne Uszler, Stewart Gordon, and Elyse Mach. *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1991), 372-373.

an exam or write a paper overnight, to prepare for a performance in such a way is generally not advisable.

Students may choose to join special interest groups, clubs, fraternities or sororities. These activities may help students to meet others with the same interests and develop future professional relationships. However, if students are not careful about choosing their involvement in non-academic activities, they may find themselves leaning too much on the social aspect of college life and neglecting their musical and academic studies.

Another aspect facing today's college students is the overwhelming and invasive presence of technology. Through the use of the internet, cell phone, and the phones with internet included (e.g. iPhone) the life of a current college student involves mass information coming and demanding a fast response. Since most colleges offer e-mail and internet access to their students and most students have a cell phone, when someone contacts them, they are expected to reply immediately. Therefore, one could spend hours sending e-mails, chatting online, or aimlessly browsing the internet.

Such websites as Facebook and MySpace sometimes aid the student in professional networking while also at times hinder their education through absorbing all of their time. These sites can be very addicting, and they can cause real life social isolation because people prefer to chat online rather than in person.⁴⁰⁵ They can also be the source of hand injuries due to the amount of typing they require. Students need to be aware of how to balance their time with the internet as a social entity and still manage to find time to practice and study.

⁴⁰⁵ Tara Stiles, "Help! I'm, Addicted to FaceBook!" in Huffington Post, (Feb. 15, 2009), in http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tara-stiles/help-im-addicted-to-faceb_b_166726.html (accessed February 25, 2009).

There are many possible activities one may partake in during college, but it is up to the student to decide which ones will benefit the pupil's studies and professional networking and which are just distractions and sources of fatigue.

Responsibility

Another reason the student feels a sense of *anguish* in college is due to all of the new responsibility. There is no one managing the student – such as a parent or a teacher. Students are free to set their own daily schedules, and their professors do not call to inquire about them when they miss class or do not turn in a homework assignment. The student is suddenly treated as an adult.

This places a great deal of responsibility onto the student's shoulders. The student is responsible to the professors for fulfilling academic obligations. The student has responsibility to maintain and balance a personal practice and study schedule. The student is responsible for living up to the expectations of the parents who are helping to pay for tuition or to the scholarship requirements that are allowing the pupil to attend the institution. Finally, the student is responsible to other students when they are working on joint academic or social projects or performing chamber music.

While the student is trying to set a schedule and manage time, it is important to prioritize. There are times in the life of a performing artist when a concert takes priority over their academic work. However, there are other times during exams and final papers when the student may not have enough time to practice the piano. At those times, the

student may go into the piano lesson and work on sight-reading skills⁴⁰⁶ or plan new repertoire. There are always things which could be learned during the piano lesson, but the student needs to make the teacher, who is often the academic advisor as well, aware of the various other activities in his or her life.

Sometimes, musical juries, final exams and papers all happen at exactly the same time. The student needs to learn how to plan ahead and effectively use time so as to not try to accomplish tasks at the last minute. Also, the student needs to assess which obligations can be fulfilled in a short amount of time and which require a longer commitment. For example, writing a paper may take a couple of days, while learning a piece of music by memory takes at least a week.

Sometimes, there is a conflict between the life of a student and as a professional musician and scholar. If a student is offered a professional performance opportunity, or a conference presentation, he or she may have to miss classes or fall behind on academic work in order to carry out the project. However, in the long run, the activity may help the student establish professional contacts and help to acquire a job. Most potential employers require proof of professional activities – or activities outside of one's degree requirements.

Responsibility to other students involves supporting performances of others through concert attendance. The student can also participate in chamber music and accompanying activities, which he or she may not need for the degree program, but which add responsibility: responsibility for supporting the other instruments, knowing

⁴⁰⁶ Seymour Bernstein, *Monsters and Angels – Surviving a Career in Music* (Wisconsin: Hal Leonard, 2002), 181.

their parts, following their lead, and finding them if they get lost during a performance.

Finally, the student is also responsible to other students if he or she chooses to participate in various student organizations, collaborate on non-academic projects, or work together with others on joint presentations for classes.

The student needs to be aware of when to answer e-mails and phone calls from peers. And, most importantly, the student needs to analyze consequences of personal decisions. The pupil needs to find the balance of supporting others on their projects and, at the same time, finding enough time to accomplish personal tasks. Sometimes, the student feels obligated to participate in a social, or non-academic, activity, because friends make the student feel guilty, but it is important to remember that in the end the student is also setting an example for others, particularly future students. Through neglecting academic work to appease friends, he or she is setting a precedent for all others in the future to also allow other people to make decisions for them.

Abandonment

As a performer, the student is in a unique situation at the college environment, a situation only he or she can assess and resolve. The student needs to learn how to establish a performing routine in order to feel rested and emotionally ready for the stage. At the same time, the student must also learn how to cope with performing abreast all of the other obligations of college life. Some students may fall into the *bad faith* of avoiding the world for days in order to carry out a performance. This may have severe consequences for the student's academic studies. This is also an unrealistic view of the

professional life. As mentioned in Chapter VI, if the professor takes the time to demonstrate to the pupil all of the stress that faculty are under while preparing for a concert, the pupil may understand that while the faculty may have many performances, the rest of their obligations, such as teaching, research and administrating, do not disappear. While it is important to prioritize, falling into *bad faith* and pretending that other responsibilities do not exist can have lasting negative results.

One of the main ways students can prepare for concerts is to practice performing in front of others. While performing in studio classes or departmental forums is valuable, it is also important to give public concerts in the community. The pianist can go to retirement homes or public schools or practice performing in front of his or her own students. It is important to make the experience resemble an actual recital as much as possible. The student can also practice public speaking during such events by giving mini-lectures to the audience about the pieces being performed. Such gestures on the part of the performer are very appreciated by non-musicians, and in the long run may bring audiences to classical music in general and add a fan base to the pianist in particular. Regardless of the location of the try out, having a formal “dry run” is indispensable in preparation for a concert.⁴⁰⁷

The days prior to performance definitely require a special awareness and some adjustments to the daily routine. For example, the pianist needs to be careful not to type too much, lift heavy objects, or participate in any kind of an activity which may cause unnecessary stress to the hands. The student should also be aware of the need for rest, overall health and well-being prior to the concert. Therefore, excess social activity, poor

⁴⁰⁷ Seymour Bernstein, *With Your Own Two Hands* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1981), 268.

choice of diet, or staying up late prior to the concert can all have a negative effect when one is on stage. Some famous pianists even believe in various omens and cling to devices which give them a sense of safety (e.g. only wearing black).⁴⁰⁸ However, if this is what gives the student the psychological support to face the *abandonment*, then perhaps those beliefs are just as important to the performance. It is very easy in *bad faith* to ignore the physical aspect of piano performance – the fact that the pupil is human and that the body needs a proper amount of attention in order to cooperate and function during the recital.

Outside of the pre-concert routine, there are other aspects of *abandonment* which only the student can solve. While performing, the student is aware of all of the *looks* coming from the audience. There are the *looks* of faculty, assessing and grading the pupil. There are the *looks* of other students, comparing the student to themselves. There are also the *looks* of parents and other audience members, who may not be musicians and have high expectations of the performance without even having musical knowledge and understanding of what it feels like.

The student must be able to acknowledge all of the people *looking* while, at the same time, concentrate on the musical composition being conveyed. The difference between the student's *abandonment* situation and that of a professional is that while a professional is also aware of the people in the audience, the people in the audience are not awarding the pianist a degree or a grade. The student, however, is dependent upon the audience to not only assess the concert for its artistic merit, but also for its academic achievement. The student is evaluated on the basis of progress, of technical difficulty,

⁴⁰⁸ Bernstein, 281.

and on the execution of the material. For a student, having a memory lapse can mean receiving a lower grade.

All of the conditions create an atmosphere of *abandonment* and of *despair*. At the moment of performance, the student feels that he or she is only limited to only the possibilities which the particular performance may bring. Despite all of the past and possible future performances, the student is evaluated on the present, and it is up to the pupil to convince the others *looking* of his or her artistry and achievement. The student may be in deep *anguish* due to negative memories of past performances or of criticism in the weeks prior to the concert, but at the moment of *abandonment* on stage, the student must concentrate on freedom, on being able to not be the past, and create a new view of self, one of a great performer.

The day following the performance is also important in the student's development as an artist. Pianists can sometimes feel depressed when something as anticipated and as grandiose as a solo recital comes to an end.⁴⁰⁹ The student should not focus on the end of one performance but should gear attention toward the planning of future recitals. The best cure for post recital "blues" is to come back to the stage as often as possible. The best cure for performance anxiety and post-performance depression is performing.⁴¹⁰ Frequent public performances not only help to calm the nerves during the concert, but they also help cure the psychological exhaustion artists experience the day after the recital.

⁴⁰⁹ Bernstein, 281.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 282.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on illuminating some aspects of the college environment which influence the student in a piano performance program. The chapter described the new responsibilities which come with the college environment, such as balancing a schedule and learning to prioritize. Other aspects mentioned were finding a performance routine in the midst of academic work and the effect technology has had on college students. While all college students may feel stress or frustration during their studies, the pianist is in a unique place of having to balance the life of a college student with that of being *abandoned* on stage as a performer.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Existential Piano Teacher

The preceding study laid out a groundwork of ideas that private piano performance teachers and students can apply to their teaching and learning in a higher educational setting. The study established three important aspects of Sartre's existential philosophy that should be considered in the piano studio relationship between professor and pupil: freedom, responsibility, and *abandonment*.

The study was not concerned with the technical aspects of piano playing. Instead the study analyzed the personal and professional relationship of teacher and student and the long-term implications that follow both individuals as a result of the relationship. The study by no means attempts to address all of the questions and situations that one may experience in the collegiate setting, nor does it limit the actions or contributions of professors and pupils. In contrast, it provides a critical analysis of the traditional view of the piano studio, with suggestions for ratification and improvement, and leaves room for the teacher and student to interpret, assemble and combine the suggested ideas as they see most appropriate in their unique situation. The overall theme of the approach is freedom and the importance of choice, leaving to the instructor and student the task of identifying the best course of action in the context of their interaction.

There are four aspects which were considered in the study, and which combined are necessary to paint an accurate picture of piano teaching on the college level: Sartre's

view of human freedom, piano performance, and the professor and student. The elements were described using Sartre's existential terminology.

Sartre's View of Human Freedom

Sartre believed that human beings are existents endowed with freedom and they bring *nothingness*, or a *nihilation* of what is into the world. Therefore, a person is always what he or she is not, and attempting to define oneself into a specific objective role, or only one possibility, always leads to *bad faith* or lying to oneself. A person has a choice in any given situation. The realization of freedom and the immense amount of responsibility that follows it bring about a sense of *anguish*.

A person perceives *other* people in the world as objectifying him or her through the *look*, attempting to frame him or her into one mode of existence, or as assigning an *essence*. The other person may not even be *looking*, but the object of the *look* believes that he or she is. However, since *existence* comes before *essence*, this project inevitably fails but still damages the person by attempting to suppress his or her freedom.

Abandonment is the realization that we are alone in the world and without excuse. In other words, no one can help a person make the decisions freedom requires, and no one will help to relieve the suffering of the consequences of these choices.

Performance

Performance is a way to channel human freedom in the listener through the analysis of the choices made by the performer. Performance is a way to make music an engaged art form, or an art which commits to arousing the freedom of the audience member through the “unconsummated”⁴¹¹ symbolic language of music. Performance, as an example of the utilization of freedom, carries a great sense of responsibility because the choices made by the performer are interpreted and possibly applied to the lives of the listener.

The performer is alone on stage, *abandoned*, and at the same time, subjected to the *look* of the audience. The performer in a higher educational setting is also judged and criticized by colleagues, faculty and administration. Therefore, the performer carries a great sense of *anguish* – on one hand due to the realization of the responsibility to *others* in the concert hall, and on the other due to the realization of freedom and the fact that nothing is preventing the performer from going against the classical performance tradition, the teacher, from making mistakes, or simply walking off the stage.

The Teacher

The teacher in a collegiate setting plays a variety of different roles: mentor and advisor, administrator, judge, and performer. In each of those roles, the teacher makes many daily decisions that carry with them an immense amount of responsibility. By

⁴¹¹ Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 240.

choosing one method of teaching he or she sets an example for all the future university professors and the future pupils of the current student. Therefore, it is important that a teacher gain a point of view of a stranger,⁴¹² or of someone who does not automatically accept the tradition of piano teaching as is but is always involved in critically assessing all decisions made based on the situation, and on the unique personality of each individual student. The teacher is also in a position to allow the student to embrace a positive view of performance – as an event of exercising choice and freedom through the communication with the audience.

The Student

The college student is placed into an environment of new and demanding responsibilities. The student adjusts to the freedoms that college life offers, to the life of a performer, as well as to the rigorous demands of academic subjects and the balancing of social life with the constant presence of mass communication and technology. The student, who may feel vulnerable, relies on the piano teacher, who is often the mentor, for support and guidance both in their musical and professional development.

While faculty members grade the pupil's progress as a performer he or she also faces *abandonment* on stage. The student, in *anguish*, realizes that nothing is preventing him or her from fulfilling the student role of obedience or from making artistic decisions which may go against the professor's teaching.

⁴¹² Maxine Greene, *Teacher as Stranger* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1973), 267.

Interaction Between the Four Elements

Existential piano teaching is not a prescribed method of teaching. It is a thought-provoking look at the practice of piano pedagogy and the interaction between teachers and students. It aims to illuminate some aspects of piano teaching as they relate to the student and teacher relationship and to stress the importance of choice and freedom in their interaction. The approach emphasizes respect of each other's freedom on behalf of both parties. The method also analyzes the large amount of responsibility involved in piano teaching and performing, responsibility both to the present and future generations of musicians.

The study also addresses the sense of *anguish* and *abandonment* during performance due to the realization of freedom and responsibility the performer has both as a performing artist and as an interpreter of music.

The approach suggests that a professor must take into account all of the roles played by the piano performance major student: the person, the student, participant in the college environment, performing artist, future piano teacher, academic, participant in today's world of mass technology. Only after a consideration of all of those roles can the piano teacher accurately advise and guide the student's musical and academic progress. Once the professor engages the student's freedom and realization of choice and, with an inspirational, creative, and individualized teaching method, moves⁴¹³ the student to learn, the student will embrace the *abandonment* during performance, discover a personal artistic path, and embrace the responsibility which it entails.

⁴¹³ Seymour B. Sarason, *Teaching As A Performing Art* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 13.

Implications for Further Study

It would be interesting to conduct a study, much like the one done by the Rogerian Method to actually test the existential method in practice, encompassing the ideas of interpretation and stage presence as part of the learning process. Future studies could perhaps relate other existential works, such as ones by Martin Heidegger and Soren Kierkegaard. One may also investigate Sartre as a piano teacher at the L'Ecole Normale in Paris and see how he applied his existential philosophy to teaching. Another case study may involve conducting interviews with famous pianists and teachers of today, questioning how they were taught and how they, in turn, currently teach their students. This would extensively address the idea of responsibility, as well as present more concrete teaching examples. It would also be useful to perform a survey of piano performance major students in a college environment, assessing their level of stress compared to other students, as well as their relationships with their piano teachers and how the relationship affected their studies and if it inspired particular future teaching philosophies.

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