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## The Pedagogical Impact of the Parallels Between Classical and Improvised Music

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# The Pedagogical Impact of the Parallels Between Classical and Improvised Music

## Abstract

As one of the most versatile instruments in the world, the piano has been used in a plethora of musical styles and settings. Since 1850, the instrument has been relatively unchanged, and has played a role in major musical style periods such as: the romantic period, the impressionist period, atonality, minimalism, ragtime, jazz, blues, country, pop, and gospel to name a few. (A History of Western Music, Burkholder, timelines, ix,x,xi) (Gordon, p13, a history of keyboard literature, Schirmer NY 1996). The versatility of this instrument can also be seen in higher education today, in the types of collegiate piano degrees offered in both classical and jazz concentrations. Many universities maintain respected piano departments in both disciplines, including: Juilliard, the University of Michigan, the University of Denver, the Manhattan School of Music, Berkeley, Texas, University of Southern California, University of Miami, and many more.

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**The Pedagogical Impact of the Parallels Between Classical and Improvised Music**

Joseph Harkins

**MUAC 4020: Introduction to Research in Piano Pedagogy**

Professor Chee-Hwa Tan

Denver University, 2018

As one of the most versatile instruments in the world, the piano has been used in a plethora of musical styles and settings. Since 1850, the instrument has been relatively unchanged, and has played a role in major musical style periods such as: the romantic period, the impressionist period, atonality, minimalism, ragtime, jazz, blues, country, pop, and gospel to name a few. (A History of Western Music, Burkholder, timelines, ix,x,xi) (Gordon, p13, a history of keyboard literature, Schirmer NY 1996). The versatility of this instrument can also be seen in higher education today, in the types of collegiate piano degrees offered in both classical and jazz concentrations. Many universities maintain respected piano departments in both disciplines, including: Juilliard, the University of Michigan, the University of Denver, the Manhattan School of Music, Berkeley, Texas, University of Southern California, University of Miami, and many more.

Current scientific research shows that there are distinct benefits of studying music (RCM Handout in email). Daniel Levitin states: “Musical activity involves nearly every region of the brain that we know about, and nearly every neural subsystem” (RCM flyer p1 (your child’s development)). The benefits of musical study include: stronger neural connections (improved brain functioning), better information processing, higher IQ, better memory and attention, better motor coordination, improved language abilities, increased emotional resilience, increased empathy, increased attention span and focus, and increased self-confidence. (RCM flyer p1-3). Dr. Sylvain Moreno, Lead Scientist, Centre for Brain Fitness, Rotman Research Institute, cements these claims by discussing the conclusivity of research: “The standard for scientific study is 60 to 70%. Our research showed that musical training impacted over 90% of the

children we studied.” (RCM flyer p5) Their claims were confirmed by three separate researchers. (RCM flyer p5)

With the advantages of a rich history of stylistic versatility and scientifically-backed cognitive benefits, I believe that piano education will continue to remain relevant. I further propose that for the piano teacher to remain relevant, he or she must not only be aware of this scientific research, but must also be aware of the parallels between classical and improvised keyboard styles. As such, the specific aim of this research is to show the distinct pedagogical impact of the parallels between classical and improvised piano music. (I will also use the word jazz throughout this paper in terms of improvisation, not style, as the jazz genre itself has a plethora of sub-styles). This research will pair time-tested principles and strategies from noteworthy music pedagogues with repertoire from classical and improvised styles. The goal of this pairing is aimed toward teachers, and toward their students from the elementary to late intermediate/early advanced levels (essentially beginner to precollege). I will show that improvised piano music and classical piano music can and should be used in tandem to foster complete musicianship in developing pianists. I will demonstrate this in three ways. First, by highlighting basic musical and technical elements that exist between the two styles. Second, by analyzing and pairing up a repertoire selection from each style. Third, by demonstrating how a teacher would strategically plan, present, and assign practice activities for the paired classical and jazz pieces.

***To show the parallels between classical and improvised piano music, I have first chosen to compare basic musical elements.*** I will highlight and compare articulation and style, and shared technical gestures. These have been chosen because the control, mastery, and/or understanding of these (and other) elements is what leads to true artistic playing, from the earliest levels of piano lessons. (PPT 1, p204). As pedagogue Janine Jacobson, author of Alfred's *Professional Piano Teaching: A Comprehensive Piano Pedagogy Textbook* series states: "Even elementary students can communicate musically. A vital first step is to help students learn to produce a musical, expressive sound and to solve technical difficulties that might interfere with musical communication." (PPT 1 204).

A sound pedagogical model of introducing and teaching articulation and style is provided in Nancy Bachus' *Baroque Spirit Book Series*. The initial emphasis is focused on historical background, which is provided to explain societal, cultural, and musical norms. This step is crucial for the student to understand the interpretative choices available to them including, but not limited to, articulation. (Cite page in baroque pdfs). Starting in this manner informs and peaks the student's interest so that creativity can be inspired. For example, her work succinctly details: the societal and architectural implications of the word *baroque*; the role of the major stylistic regions of Germany, Italy, France, and England; and, "Unifying themes including virtuosity, the use of counterpoint and *Doctrine of Affections*. Each piece focuses not on reflecting the composer's emotions but on evoking a general emotion or affection." (pages 1,2 Piano repertoire guide: intermediate and advanced literature, Bachus). In addition, she covers the history of keyboard instruments at the time, noting the differences with Baroque keyboard

instruments and today's pianos. This background and instrumental history gives context and clarity for teacher and student when Bachus discusses the application of "special attention to touch and articulation. Decide on the articulation of each musical idea, notate your decisions in the score and be consistent in your approach to phrasing and articulation." (Bachus p.6).

Another piano educator who understands and demonstrates this historical importance is Leila Viss, of 88 Creative Keys, and director of the Lamont Piano Preparatory Program at Denver University. In both group lessons and her own private studio, Mrs. Viss will use studio wide modules to peak student interest. For one of these modules, she crafted mock-Baroque wigs out of toilet paper rolls, and students also learned Baroque dance steps (88 Creative Keys). Teaching examples such as these show that true educators place importance in student knowledge, creativity, and ownership.

Articulation from the classical period is similar to articulation from the Baroque period, in that it is characterized by historical, cultural, and stylistic norms from the period. For example, "words such as control, order, precision, stateliness, simplicity, taste, and elegance" are used to describe the classical period (PPT2 245). "Articulation supports the classical style in the following ways: by delineating changes of character and mood, by clarifying motives and themes, and by enhancing the structural elements of beat, meter, phrase, and cadence." (PPT2 p250-1) Articulations that are especially important include: legato, non-legato, and staccato; frequent rests for the precise release of notes; and short slurs, such as slightly emphasized two and three notes slurs (PPT2 250-251).

However, this aforementioned articulation knowledge is rarely included in the score, save for heavily edited editions. (PPT2 245) Even with edited student editions, the piano teacher must guide the student carefully in this artistry. Here again, historical information is necessary. Musicians during the classical period understood the performance practice and the articulations and characters necessary; therefore, scores from the classical period do not include many interpretive instructions. (PPT2 245).

Mozart's Piano Sonata Number 12 in F Major, K332 serves as an able vehicle of discussion, offering relatable material to further explore how the historical knowledge demonstrated by pedagogues like Nancy Bachus and Janine Jacobson can be used as an educational process. Elements of the classical style that I will highlight are found within the third movement.

Especially true for Mozart's sonatas is the premise that articulation serves the purpose of creating character and mood changes. (MuPR studio lessons). Dr. Stephanie Cheng, chair of the piano department at the University of Denver Lamont School of Music, coaches the opening of this movement as a juxtaposition of virtuosic playing and simple, sweet, dolce playing (MuPR Studio lessons).



Assai Allegro

①

④

⑧

⑫

*f*

*p*

*dolce*

For example, in measures 1 to 11, the pianist should produce a clear forte sound, achieved by weightful fingerwork that plays to the bottom of the keyboard. (MUPR studio lessons). Dynamic shading can also help this, with a full forte sound for measures 1, 2, and the first two beats of measure 3, followed by a gradual crescendo that ends cleanly on the final eighth note in measure 6. There is a playful back and forth between these two ideas of virtuosity and dolce in measures 12, 13, and 14. Measure 12 is short, and questioning through the downbeat of measure 13. The

pickup to measure 14 and measure 14 return briefly to the virtuoso flourish, and lead in to bar 15, marked dolce.

Articulation becomes especially important in these moments. For example, to propel us to the dolce character, it is necessary for the teacher and performer to make decisions.

A musical score for measures 12 through 15. Measure 12 is circled. The score is in a key with two flats and a common time signature. The right hand plays a melodic line with eighth notes and slurs. The left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. Dynamic markings include *p* and *dolce*. Fingerings 1, 2, 1, 4 are indicated above the right hand in measure 14.

A stylistically appropriate interpretation might include short staccato articulations on the two pickup notes to measure 15; this is followed by a shortened, subdued left hand staccato accompaniment simmering underneath the playful melody which employs staccato eighth notes and two note slurs. (MUPR studio lessons). A marked example for student practice may look something like this:

A musical score for measures 12 through 17, marked for student practice. Measures 12-15 are identical to the previous score. Measure 12 is circled. The left hand accompaniment in measures 12-15 includes dynamic markings *f*, *mf*, *mp*, and *f*. Measure 16 is circled and shows a staccato left hand accompaniment with dynamic markings *et.*, *fp*, *fp*, and *fp*. Fingerings 4, 3, and 2 are indicated below the left hand in measures 16 and 17.

More Mozart analysis using elements outlined by Jacobson if needed...

Observation of rests for cleanliness and character - Opening page and, serves the phrasing - in the cantabile sad section Also has precise release of notes.

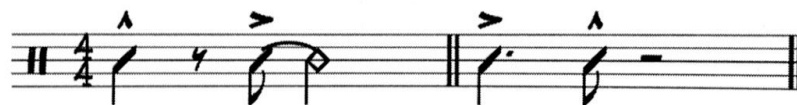
Slightly emphasized Two note slurs - end of mvt3 development

These teaching principles of historical background, how articulation serves style, and careful coaching of “understood/assumed” articulations crossover into jazz instruction. This is the true value for the educator: the crossover of a sound teaching processes from the classical to the jazz genre.

From Bachus and Jacobson, we see the importance of beginning with history and linking it to articulation. This can be seen in the work of jazz pedagogue Lynn Baker, saxophonist, composer, author, and former chair of the Jazz Department at the University of Denver Lamont School of Music. In his text *The Shape Method*, Baker discusses the history of jazz rhythm: “The heart of jazz rhythm is the “Charleston” rhythm and its variations. The “Charleston” is from the famous rag by J.P. Johnson of the same name, but its origins are African and Afro-Cuban. It began as a variation of a bell pattern from Africa” (Baker, p1).

#### The Shape Method – Chapter 1

The two common forms of the Charleston Rhythm are length variations of the original phrase:



Jazz articulation is linked to this history, which: “generates phrases in good jazz time” (Baker, pvi). Baker further asserts that articulation serves jazz music as a “principle expressive

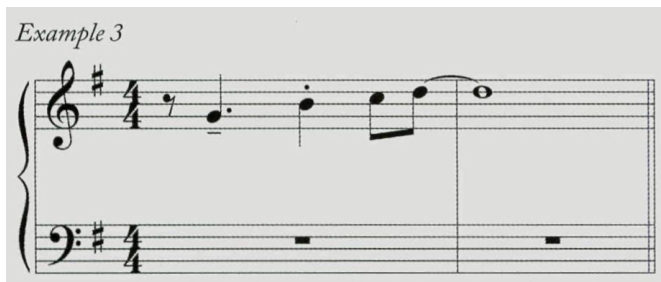
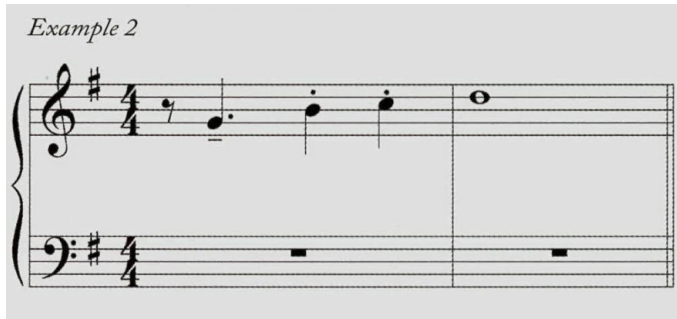
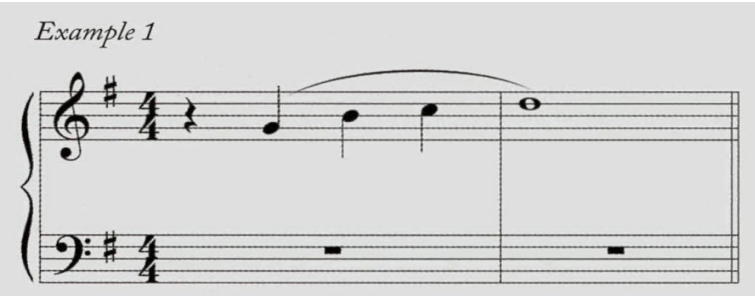
gesture.” (Baker p1v). Primarily, jazz articulations are utilized to add expression and rhythmic energy. This harkens back to the importance of rhythm from the African and Afro Cuban traditions: “the added rhythmic energy provided by articulations at the end of notes is a vital component of jazz tone and jazz time.” (Baker, iv).

Furthermore, jazz articulation serves the same purpose as classical articulations: artistry through expressive mood and effect (Baker, iv). This can be seen in Gary Lindsay’s *Jazz Arranging Techniques: From Quartet to Big Band*. Director of Studio Jazz Writing at the University of Miami, Lindsay provides a detailed and process oriented text covering many facets of the jazz style. A telling parallel emerges from his writing on articulation: “It is possible to indicate an articulation on almost every note of a passage. This is not practical and can make sight reading more difficult. Passages without articulations will be interpreted by performers according to the style and tradition of the music.” (Lindsay, p63). Therefore, as with classical articulations, a premium must be placed on historical knowledge that informs stylistic decisions.

It is important to note three common types of articulation from the articulation list in *Jazz Arranging Techniques*: tenuto, staccato, and side accent. (Lindsay, p60). The staccato is “short and light, and not accented;” the tenuto is a “note played to its full value (a quarter note on the first beat is held *to* the second beat);” and the side accent is “played percussively at all dynamic levels with a quick decay extending almost to its full written value (Lindsay, p60).”

A model of source material for this type of teaching comes from Phillip Keveren, “co-author, major composer, and MIDI orchestrator of the internationally acclaimed Haï Leonard Student Piano Library, a complete piano method for young students.” (Keveren article p1). The aforementioned practice of jazz articulations serving the tradition of jazz rhythms is present in Keveren’s article on *Interpreting Jazz Accents* from the piano pedagogy magazine, *Clavier Companion*. In the article, he presents the opening notes of the famous piece, *When the Saints Go Marching In*.

Relating accents in music to accents in speech, Keveren states: “(Our son’s) young ears had adapted quickly to his new surroundings. So it is with the language of jazz. It has an accent all its own.” In addition to this, Keveren utilizes two of the three most common jazz accents highlighted above from Lindsay’s jazz arranging text: tenuto and staccato.



In example 1, the music is written in a “classical” light (Keveren, p30). In example two, the second beat is anticipated or “pushed;” the effect is “flavoring the phrase with the accent of jazz.” (Keveren p30). In example three, the tied eighth note gives an even greater sense of jazz style by anticipating the downbeat of the next measure. Typical jazz accents are also included in example three, the tenuto and the staccato, both placed for added rhythmic emphasis (Keveren p 31). Perhaps most importantly, Keveren stresses the value of listening, (citing one of Louis Armstrong’s versions of the tune) for only then can authenticity be achieved. (Keveren p31).

Noteworthy pedagogues in both styles place great importance on articulation as a means to authenticity and artistry. In either genre, the relationship between history, style, and articulation shows the ability to crossover styles with sound teaching practices. Another parallel beneficial to piano educators between classical and improvised styles is technique.

What is a fundamentally sound technique? How does one codify this? Barbara Lister Sink questions, “Are there are as many techniques as there are pianists?” (Lister Sink) What about the countless differing methods, technical exercises and etudes published and taught throughout the history of the keyboard? What about famed classical virtuosos like Vladimir Horowitz and Arthur Rubinstein, or famed jazz virtuosos like Art Tatum and Oscar Peterson, whose video recordings show four different pianists effortlessly displaying showbiz virtuosity? (cite the four youtube videos Horowitz, Rubinstein, Peterson, Tatum).

Barbara Lister-Sink’s *Freeing the Caged Bird*, winner of the 2002 Music Teacher’s National Association Frances Clark Pedagogy Award, is a remarkable resource for all pianists and teachers. Particularly helpful are some of the main insights from the work. Awareness of the body (at rest and in motion) and efficient muscle use are essential. This is achieved through optimal bodily alignment with posture centered over the sitz bones; appropriate contraction at the moment of weight bearing; easy, efficient lift of the forearm; free fall of the forearm; and perhaps most important for prevention of injury, instantaneous release. Sink further outlines the mechanisms of the piano and the body to show that they are a well designed team aided by

gravity. Finally, she asserts that it is possible for a pianist to play the piano for hours at a time and leave the piano feeling more relaxed than they were before. (Lister Sink)

A fundamentally sound technique provides the means to achieve the ultimate goal: artistry. *On Piano Playing* by Gyorgy Sandor is crystal clear in its emphasis on developing artistry, “a sophisticated technique serves the creative purposes of the interpreter.” (Sandor, xii). Josef Lhevinne’s *Basic Principles in Piano Forte Playing* also points to artistry and the production of beautiful tone. “Touch is a matter of elimination of non-essentials, so that the greatest artistic ends may be achieved with the simplest means.” (Lhevinne, p12) As Chopin said, “We are not dealing with ingenious theories but whatever goes straight to the point and deals with the technical side of the art.” (Lister-Sink)

While there are exceptions to the rule, the rudiments of music apply across all piano styles. Piano music in the classical and improvised styles can be broken down into two patterns: scalar patterns and chordal patterns (MUAC Chee Int. Ped) Because basic technical gestures serve these patterns, gestures can crossover into any genre or style; therefore a fundamentally sound piano technique can crossover into any genre or style.



(IMSLP cite mozart)

Example #, measures 20-28, from Mozart's first movement of his Sonata in F major, K332, shows both of these patterns. In measures 23-4, both the left and right hand outline a chordal pattern in d minor. In measure 25, the left hand plays a blocked chord (an e diminished seventh chord), while the right hand plays a descending scale (d harmonic minor).

(Cite Real Book Sixth Edition)

Example # comes from Charlie Parker's Donna Lee, a staple of the standard jazz repertoire. The final 8 bars (bars 25-32) of this composition also show scalar and chordal patterns. Parker seamlessly transitions from scalar and chordal material, with bars 25-7 utilizing a scalar approach, bar 28 using an arpeggiated chordal approach, bar 29 again using scalar, and bar 30 returning to chordal.

*Touch and Rhythm Techniques for the Jazz Pianist*, John Mehegan offers a dissenting perspective in relation to technical crossover. Although it is a dated text (1962), I would like to highlight his opposing view: "The central problem in relation to the piano lies in the fact that the traditional methods of pedagogy, so essential to a basic understanding of the instrument, do break down when applied without modification to a jazz performance." (Mehegan, p2) I do not think educators should believe in the idea of a technical or pedagogical approach that "breaks down" from style to style. This is why educators like Jacobson and Bachus place great emphasis on knowledge of articulation and style, from the earliest levels (Bachus and Jacobson). When one thinks of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic styles, one alters their playing based on the desired sound goal of the style. (Jacobson Classical vs Romantic considerations from PPT). One certainly does not heavily modify one's technique, or believe that it "breaks down." Instead, appropriate gestures are used, that *all remain true to the primary technique*.

The primary technique begins with the body, evolving into gestures that serve pianists in achieving ease of motion (Lister Sink). In her video, Lister-Sink stresses that basic form must be mastered from the beginning with the most simple movements - primary technique - and then applied to more and more complex movements - secondary technique (Lister Sink). Because the sole focus of this research is not technique, I will focus on the idea of gesture. Gestures are the essential elements that comprise a pianist's primary technique. These can be expanded into more refined and complex gestures, allowing pianists to move with greater efficiency and motion during complex moments and passages (Lister-Sink). Just as Lister-Sink asserts that basic form *remains the same* throughout all levels of repertoire, teachers must remember that basic gestures *remain the same* no matter the style (Lister Sink).

Because the role of technique is artistry, gestures serve the purpose of guiding the efficient execution of articulations. Two articulations that are particularly important in both styles are the two note slur and the staccato. The gesture for the two note slur is taught right away in Frances Clark's music tree, with the piece *Take Off*.

INSERT EXAMPLE OF TAKE OFF/Landing

Really an exercise in two note slurs, this piece gives the student the chance to master the required gesture. This gesture can be best described as a "drop onto the first note (with a firm, curved first knuckle joint), a shift or roll of the arm weight to the second note, and a graceful lift of the arm off of the second note. This is *one* continuous motion" (PPT 1 p146). For the beginner student, the words, "drop, roll, lift" can be particularly helpful for understanding the

larger arm motion. Example # below from *Professional Piano Teaching Vol 1* illustrates this, with arrows included to aid the student with the proper arm motions.

The image shows a musical score for piano in 4/4 time, marked 'Slowly' and 'mf'. The score is for the right hand (treble clef) and left hand (bass clef). The right hand part consists of two measures. The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) with a downward arrow above the first note and an upward arrow above the second note. The second measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (C5, B4, A4) with a downward arrow above the first note and an upward arrow above the second note. The left hand part consists of two measures. The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (G3, A3, B3) with a downward arrow above the first note and an upward arrow above the second note. The second measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (C4, B3, A3) with a downward arrow above the first note and an upward arrow above the second note. The composer's name, ROBERT D. VANDALL, is printed in the upper right corner of the score.

In learning to play staccato, Nancy Bachus discusses the two gestures necessary as coming from two parts of the body - the wrist (essentially the arm) and the fingertip. Furthermore, one can think of these as wrist staccatos and finger staccatos. (MuPR Int Ped guest lecture). For the beginning student, Jacobson describes the importance of using the whole arm when initially learning to play staccato. It is crucial for the students to know that the release is what makes the staccato; however, they must be coached to avoid thinking that the sound comes from a large upward motion that pulls from the key. Rather, they should employ a quick release with the wrist, maintaining closeness to the keys (PPT 1 p145).

The finger staccato is what Bachus describes as a “flick” with a firm fingertip. She also notes that sometimes for the desired sound, a mixture of both wrist and finger staccatos are used. These more advanced gestures serve pianists well at the intermediate and advanced levels. An example of a piece that requires these staccato gestures is Debussy’s *The Snow is Dancing* from *Children’s Corner*.

INSERT EXAMPLE OF Snow is Dancing, Debussy

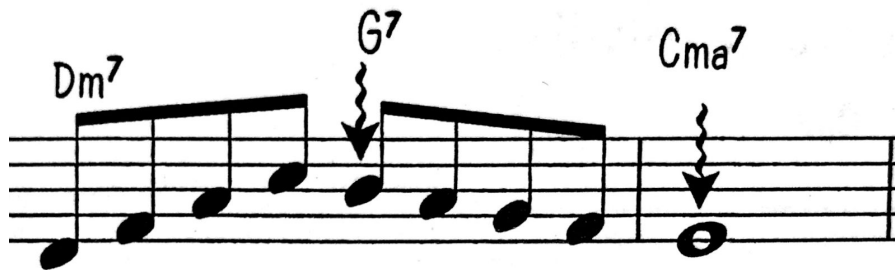
Fingertip staccatos are required here, with the student needing to treat the fingertips as “another set of ears” to achieve the right crisp articulation and sense of ringing space left between the notes (MuPR practicum Chee-Hwa).

In the jazz tradition, these same gestures also serve the articulation necessary to execute the Charleston rhythm. By noting Lynn Baker’s Charleston example paired with his discussion of the charleston as a long-short articulation with emphasis on the short eighth note, the crossover of gesture can be observed (Baker p1,2). Essentially, the pianist employs an accented two note slur - a drop of the arm on the dotted quarter note, and a lift/release with a staccato articulation.



This same crossover can be applied as the student advances to scales and arpeggios. As the student masters the gestures required for these, parallels can be drawn with jazz licks (small motives) which also employ scalar and arpeggiated patterns. Often called “public domain” material, licks are common motives used to develop improvisation vocabulary and fluency

(Cowan, Advanced Jazz Improvisation Music 5590). A brief example below illustrates a common jazz lick employing chordal and scalar patterns, which can be used to apply technical gesture.



In brief summary, classical and improvised music can be used to teach the gestures, shapes, and patterns - all of which present challenges - that allow pianists to take ownership of technique. It is crucial for piano teachers to understand this role of gesture, so that their own artistry and their students' artistry can be served by the same sound technique.

To further show the parallels between classical and improvised piano music, I have chosen to pair up repertoire from each style. The two repertoire selections I have chosen are appropriate for a late intermediate pianist, classified as pianists who have accomplished: fluent playing in compound meter, frequently using 16th note rhythmic patterns, playing syncopation, shaping long phrases and showing phrase endings, portraying character in pieces, fluency with trills, mordents and turns, fluency with clef and key changes, fluency in up to three sharps or flats, fluency with scales and arpeggios up to at least two octaves hands together, recognizing phrases and cadences, and playing multiple voices within one hand. ( PPT2 pgs2-4)

At first glance and first listen, it may seem that Bach's Prelude No. 21 in Bb major from the *Well Tempered Clavier Book I* and Milt Jackson's *Bags Groove* (a jazz blues that is a staple of the standard jazz repertoire) have little in common. However, pairing repertoire begins to have pedagogical benefits when commonalities are discovered from analysis.

INSERT BACH PAGE 1 (cite imslp)

An element that links these stylistically different compositions is hand independence. For example, in measures 1-2 and 5-7 of the prelude, there is a left hand melody in eighth notes, paired with a broken chordal accompaniment pattern in the right hand. Both voices employ different rhythms and both require different gestures. The left hand gesture is determined by articulation choice. An option for performance would be to play with detached eighth notes, with emphasis on the eighth notes that land on beat 1 and 3 (the strong beats of the bar). It is important to note that this is not an accent, but a rhythmic emphasis. By placing a bit more length on these notes a pianist remains authentic to the articulation options available to baroque instruments, which did not have the dynamic capabilities of the modern piano. (MUPR Cheng studio). The right hand utilizes rotation to play the sixteenth note chordal pattern. (Cheng lessons).

INSERT BAGS GROOVE

(Cite Realbook)

A common skill for jazz pianists is the ability to mimic the upright bass of a jazz combo by playing jazz bass lines with the left hand. For students, this skill is also important for

developing hand independence and working toward solo jazz piano fluency. Bags groove can be assigned to the student several ways: the student could play left hand chords with a Charleston or similar jazz rhythm with melody in the RH followed by blues improvisation; they could play a left hand bassline (using quarter notes) with right hand chords (accompanying style); and they could play a left hand bassline (using quarter notes) with the right hand playing the melody. It is this last option that becomes beneficial in this instance.

For the sake of practice, a jazz bassline could be provided by the teacher, or assigned as a composition assignment for the student. (It is assumed that the student has learned jazz basslines in some capacity before this repertoire pairing). Because the melody of bags groove is just a short motive repeated three times, the student can focus their attention on their left hand in practice. The same attention to detail required in the Bach example applies here. Jazz bass lines provide support and rhythmic stability. In the swing style, which is the style of *Bags Groove*, bass players place rhythmic emphasis on beats 2 and 4 (Lynn Baker pg v). A connection can be made here for the student in their practice. Similar to Bach, decide on a stylistically appropriate articulation for the left hand to be played throughout the piece. In this case, the accompanying gesture is really just arm weight for emphasis on beats 2 and 4. Too much of an accent derails the steady quarter note-walking bassline pulse.

For the student to be able to become fluent in each style, hand independence must be practiced in each style; by pairing the Bach prelude with Bags Groove, the student improves a vital functional piano skill.



Additionally, a link between these two works can be formed with the element of motivic development. In the opening measures of the Bach (measures 1-2), the left hand melody is sequenced every two beats. This idea of motivic development appears in measures 3, 4, and 5 with the left hand descending chordal motive that occurs on Beats 1, 2, to the downbeat of beat three. In Bags Groove, the melody is clearly a short riff (motive) repeated three times. For the student, only linking the idea of motive in melodies would be a bit superficial. The value of analyzing and understanding the Bach is the application of motivic alteration to improvisation. By realizing the amount of material Bach pulls from two short motives, the student can begin to think in a musically creative and focused way about their improvisation.

By beginning to approach repertoire in this fashion, the piano teacher can better serve the goal of complete musicianship for their students. In addition, for students who specialize, the teacher will find themselves well-prepared to facilitate learning in either style, and perhaps encourage the student to try new styles.

Finally, I have chosen to show the parallels between classical and improvised piano music by demonstrating how a teacher would present, assign, and coach paired repertoire from above. Before I delve deeper into the teaching of paired repertoire, it is important to note another study into the piano and the human brain. This research deals directly with the topic of jazz piano vs. classical piano. More specifically, it shows that brain functioning is different between jazz and classical piano players.

“A study published by the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences (MPI CBS), has found that musicians who work in the two fields demonstrate substantially different brain activity, even when they're playing the same music.” (cite article in email from dr. Cheng) The researchers discuss the difficulty of switching between genres, even for seasoned performers. They quoted famed jazz pianist Keith Jarrett on his response to playing a concert of jazz and classical works: “No, that's hilarious,” he said. “It’s [because of] the circuitry. Your system demands different circuitry for either of those two things.” (Cite same article). As we continue to learn more about the human brain on music, especially in the aforementioned study, it becomes clear that performing full concerts that mix both genres or attempting to specialize in both genres professionally would be tremendously difficult. However, this research should *not* sway pedagogues and pianists to one side or the other. Rather, the pedagogue seeks to encourage students by exposing them to all styles and coaching their artistry in these styles. A philosophy held by pedagogue Max Camp rings true. Camp believes that every person can learn to play the piano with artistry at some level and every teacher needs to believe this, want this, and plan for this. (Max Camp, p45).

The first step I propose for teaching paired repertoire is to engage and inspire the student with a sound goal. Professor Chee-Hwa Tan, Chair of Piano Pedagogy at the University of Denver, teaches this ideal in her pedagogy courses. Students who are engaged and involved in the sound goal are students who will be inspired and motivated. (Int ped. MUPR ). Other top music educators hold this idea as well. In the essay *The Nature of Expertise: Narrative*

*Descriptions of 19 Common Elements Observed in the Lessons of Three Renowned*

*Artist-Teachers*, Robert Duke and Amy Simmons observe and compare the teaching of Richard Killmer, Professor of Oboe at the Eastman School of Music; Donald McInnes, Professor of Strings at the University of Southern California; and Nelita True, Professor of Piano at the Eastman School of Music. Notably, all three educators “have a clear auditory image of the piece that guides their judgements about the music,” and, “they demand a consistent standard of sound quality from their students” (bulletin of the council for research in music education, fall 2006 no170 p12).”

Therefore, I propose that educator should lead the student in active listening of recordings by Andras Schiff for the Bach prelude and of the title track of Miles Davis’ *Bags Groove*. This activity of coaching active listening prepares the student for their own listening projects, and helps them to begin to develop their own clear auditory image of the piece. This should be followed by teacher demonstration, to be sure that the student’s perception is clearly in line with the auditory image from the recordings.

Next, the teacher should lead the student in deciding and properly executing articulation. For the Bach, this means coaching the student’s subtle emphasis on the strong beats of the bar, while maintaining a detached eighth note sound. The lesson assignment should include left hand alone practice aimed at mastering the sound goal. Immediately, the parallel can be drawn to the jazz bassline required for *Bags Groove*. This articulation should also be coached, with emphasis on beats 2 and 4 of the walking quarter note bassline. The lesson assignment should include left

hand alone practice of walking a bassline, with metronome, while listening for emphasis on beats 2 and 4.

Because jazz bass lines typically improvised, it is important for the teacher to guide the student a step further in terms of improvisation practice by imposing limitations. As Stravinsky said, “The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees one's self. And the arbitrariness of the constraint serves only to obtain precision of execution.”

([https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/igor\\_stravinsky](https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/igor_stravinsky). Trying to find a more reputable source for this) Or as educator Robert Duke stresses in his book *Intelligent Music Teaching*, “Everything “new to us” is colored by our past experiences, and every novel learning experience is affected to some extent by what we already know and what we are able to do.” (Duke, p139). In other words, relating the known to the unknown. Therefore in this instance, a practice constraint of practicing basslines from a chordal perspective can free up the student. A blues jazz bassline can be executed using mostly notes of the triads of the chord changes. Relating a basic triadic skill to improvising bass lines gives the student a confidence grounded in something they already know.

Finally, after the student has achieved security in both repertoire selections a creative composition assignment should be assigned. An example of using a classical piece to spark compositional and improvisational creativity can be seen in the second movement of Mozart's Sonata K.332, marked Adagio, in B-flat major. Editions vary from the earliest published editions to Mozart's manuscript (see score example). For example, the performer is given two

realized performance options during the return of the opening theme in bar 21. While this is a common occurrence among scholarly editions of classical music, it bears special significance to this research because this movement is frequently embellished and improvised when performed. The late pianist Friedrich Gulda was known for his (often controversial) interpretive license, ability to cross over between classical and improvised styles, and for educating renowned concert pianists such as Martha Argerich and Claudio Abbado (article from Interlude). In a live performance of the Adagio, he takes great liberties in ornamenting and improvising melodies, over the written left hand accompaniment (youtube source).

For the educator, this provides crossover practice opportunities through limitations. The structure of the written left hand can be maintained, freeing up the pianist to improvise or embellish within this framework. For apprehensive teachers or pianists, a quick listen to the Gulda reveals a pianist taking some extreme freedoms with Mozart's music. It is important to remember that the goal is not always to publicly flaunt in this way, but to inwardly express creativity within the practice session or the lesson. Sample practice ideas could include emphasis on ornament. Perhaps a student needs work on trills. Their assignment could be to plan moments within the music - such as measures 21, 23, and 26 - to improvise trills around the melody. Other ornaments could include chromatic or diatonic grace notes, suspensions, and rhythmic syncopations. After this is explored, the student could begin to compose right hand variations or new melodies for the next lesson. Finally, the student could practice improvising freely over the existing left hand, drawing upon their previous ornament and variation/embellishment practice.

Saxophonist and educator Lynn Baker demonstrates this idea of constraint in his improvisation coaching for jazz ensembles. (MUAC number) For example, a group activity for learning to improvise with the clave includes limitations. First, tonal vocabulary is discussed to decide what scalar options the improviser may use over each given chord. Second, (Finish filling this in from class notes) Teaching examples such as Lynn Baker's show that thoughtful limitations allow for the unpredictability of improvisation to be practiced in a technically sound way.

Additionally, Pedagogue Chee-Hwa Tan will often assign composition assignments to her studio that are to be based on a piece of repertoire learned by everyone in the studio. The students are then given compositional constraints based on the chosen repertoire ranging from rhythm, to harmony, to texture (MUpR Int Ped). This same idea can be applied in the combination of elements from the blues and Bach. A sample assignment could read as follows: Create a blues in the style of Bach. Using the harmonic structure from *Bags Groove*, compose a blues that uses a left hand melody figure similar to Bach's. Your blues should be at least two choruses in length to allow you to develop your motive.

**(Conclusion still needs work)**

In conclusion, educators and students have the pleasure of a seemingly endless and varied stylistic repertoire from which to select music. They also have the benefit of scientifically-backed benefits that have wide-ranging and significant impacts on the brain. The goal is artistry that holds improvisation AND repertoire to the same standard of importance. No teacher should force either style upon their student in terms of choosing quickly at a young age, or from the first lessons (for older students). It is my hope that this research inspires other

pedagogues to adopt, expand, and further research the parallels between classical and improvised music in order to foster complete musicianship and artistry in the next generation of piano students.

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