

The following symposium, including Dmitri Bashkirov, Christopher Elton, Peter Feuchtwanger, Norma Fisher, Philip Fowke, Richard Goode, Anton Kuerti, Murray McLachlan, Ronan O'Hora, Yonty Solomon and Fanny Waterman, appeared in *Piano* magazine in July 2004

A JOYFUL PRIVILEGE

No teachers are more exhilaratingly challenged than those who teach piano. The sheer size and variety of repertoire, coupled with the unique complexities of mental and physical technique, see to that. **Jeremy Siepmann** joins 16 eminent colleagues to explore a world of endless fascination and infinite rewards

JEREMY SIEPMANN: 'Those who can, do; those who can't, teach'. So said George Bernard Shaw, touching a sore spot with more than a grain of truth, but neglecting to point out that teaching is itself very much a form of doing, and that many great practitioners of whatever subject is under discussion, have proved, for all their eminence, to be abysmal teachers. From this perspective, one might perhaps amend Shaw's dictum to read 'Those who can, teach; those who can't, preach'. Whatever one's views, teaching has been among the central passions of many 'doers', in many fields. Joining me to discuss this 'greatest profession in the world', to quote Fanny Waterman, are the lady herself (perhaps the most famous piano teacher in Britain), and a wide-ranging group of pianist-teachers from both sides of the Atlantic. Several have a rare and privileged overview of our pianistic population by virtue of their official positions, and thus have a width and breadth of perspective denied to the independent teachers, of whom I'm very proud and pleased to be one. Andrew Ball, Christopher Elton, Douglas Finch, William Fong, Richard McMahon, Murray McLachlan, Ronan O'Hora and Mark Ray are Heads of Keyboard Studies at, respectively, the Royal College of Music, the Royal Academy, Trinity College, the Purcell School, The Royal Welsh College of Music and Dance, Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and the Royal Northern College of Music, and all enjoy richly rewarding performing careers. So too do Dmitri Bashkirov, Philip Fowke, Richard Goode, Anton Kuerti and Yonty Solomon. Norma Fisher (who once shared a first prize with Ashkenazy), Peter Feuchtwanger and myself have all performed (in Norma's case, extensively) but have long been predominantly, and joyfully, absorbed in teaching, both independently and at various institutions both in Britain and abroad. As passionate teachers all, it seemed appropriate to begin with a discussion of first principles (and, as it turned out, a few more besides).

FANNY WATERMAN: For me, the point of departure is how to make the piano, a percussion instrument, sing. Pupils have to learn how to balance the hands, bring out parts in the viola register, and to 'voice' chords. The next thing is a meticulous attention to the text and to its different shades of meaning. There are many allegros, after all (con brio, moderato, con fuoco etc.) and the same goes for dynamic markings. One needs also to learn the 'fingerprints' of different composers, since the meaning of a particular marking differs from one composer to another: a sforzato in Beethoven isn't the same as a sforzato in Chopin or Rachmaninov. And this

includes tempo markings, of course. You can't put a metronome marking to 'andante', because the meaning of 'andante' in Mozart is quite different from an 'andante' in Tchaikovsky.

JS: And of course the meaning of a particular term can change even within the music of a single composer. Indeed in the output of long-lived composers like Haydn, Brahms and Liszt, such things are almost bound to happen.

WATERMAN: Exactly. And pupils must also acquire a keen awareness of structure, the finest sensitivity to the various expression marks, the overall dynamics of the piece and so on. The next thing, *very* important, is rhythmic vitality. Never stand still. Always move forward.

CHRISTOPHER ELTON: My own starting point is to believe that all students have their own identity and potential performing personality, and to encourage them to do the same. I believe that freedom – 'musical' or technical - can only come when there is assurance and confidence. Without secure guidelines there's only a potential for some kind of anarchy – and that's no basis for confidence. I encourage students not to see music in a narrow, 'piano-obsessed' way. Keeping the mind fresh and curious needs other stimulation. Teach them how to work economically; stress the need to find real enjoyment in practising as well as in performance. . . .

PHILIP FOWKE: . . . Encourage freedom of thought, freedom of *movement*; get them to listen to and participate in all kinds of music; to have a healthy disdain for competitions! Teacher and pupil should have the humility to admit ignorance. And on a more immediately practical level, all musicians, not just pianists, should learn how to read a score, and to hear and conduct it away from the piano, to question the dynamic markings and notation in reference to original sources and later editions, and to question every sound, colour and balance.

YONTY SOLOMON: Playing the piano is fundamentally about life, self-expression and communication. Myra Hess used to say that great musicians are great human beings. I agree, and encourage all students to nourish their musicianship and technique through an awareness of the collective aspects of philosophy, painting, sculpture, literature, drama, psychology, anatomy and architecture, amongst many other disciplines. I hope to nurture a perspective which allows them to transcend conventionally acceptable standards of piano-playing (and the nature of the piano itself) by familiarising themselves with the expressive possibilities of the voice, spoken and sung, and of all the instruments of the orchestra. To draw, too, on the sounds of nature - bird-song (the nightingale's trill), the wind, storms and so on. We need to reflect the bowing techniques of string-players in our phrasing, and to emulate the breathing, emotional expression and melismatic freedom of the human voice, with its myriad inflections and nuances. . . .

ANDREW BALL: . . . to keep my own love of music and my musical enthusiasms fresh, lively and full of wonder, so that I can try to infect my students with this marvelous, lifelong 'illness'! *Not* to assume I have a monopoly of knowledge or ability, and not to impose my personality on students (a pointless exercise that never produces music-making of integrity). Always honour our students' identity and individuality, and help them towards self-actualisation...*their* selves, not ours. When a student takes you by surprise but simultaneously convinces you in their performance, it's one of the most wonderful experiences you can have. Encourage students to involve themselves with as much different music and non-piano music as possible. This is the time of life when we can get to know the whole repertoire through our fingers!

RICHARD McMAHON: Be pragmatic, consolidating existing skills; be constructive; be patient - you have to learn to wait while people develop. Sit back at the outset of each lesson and listen for as much as possible. Avoid the temptation of jumping in with advice too soon!; draw analogies

with other music and art forms - or skills outside the arts altogether (I've even discussed football training schemes quite seriously, as an analogy to encourage intelligent practising). Keep one's ego at bay! Encourage, encourage and encourage!

FOWKE: I quite agree. And I like very much what you say about consolidating existing skills. I think it's very important *never* to give students the sense that they have to start all over again.

McLACHLAN: . . . and to avoid dogmatism, while retaining principles that need to be varied, expanded, rethought and transformed, for every pupil, not once, but many, many times. Strive to draw out pupils' potential; find the special individual magic which is always there, at least to some extent, rather than to clone 'success' by drumming in pedantic methodology. By making the lesson's duration a 'special period' rather than just another 90 minutes or whatever on a timetable, both motivation and self-esteem can be nurtured in the pupil. It's vital that warmth and empathy is present, so pupils never feel they're being tested, judged (or about to be victimised!). Confidence is vital in piano playing, and the 'healing process' is largely concerned with building up esteem in an organic way (not by materialistic success or comparison with others, but by focusing on a love of the dots on the page, and the desire to share this with others); self-listening must top the list of priorities: it ultimately determines the success of everything in a pupil's development. In terms of teacher-pupil relationships, when things are really firing themselves up pupils will 'give' more and more. It's not a case of their being the proverbial sponge, but rather of an ever-increasing universe of wonder, from which both pupil and teacher will thrive and develop. Every aspect of mind, body, soul and spirit has to be nurtured, protected, developed and cherished. It's vital to develop 'inner conceptions' at the highest and most detailed levels. Celebrate the unattainable, and be thankful that much of the joy will come from trying to achieve the impossible!

DOUGLAS FINCH: . . . to understand how each student thinks, and to develop a rapport. Take every opportunity to emphasise the fun and enjoyment of music-making; develop students' ability to practise imaginatively, analytically and purposefully. This isn't just intellectual analysis, but becoming aware of (and more importantly, taking delight in) the most minute details, which may *appear* to be mundane and routine musical devices (scales, trills etc.).

RONAN O'HORA: . . . to build an awareness that whilst the emotional and intuitive side of the playing are the most important in communicative terms, the intuition can be developed and 'educated' (in other words, a growth in knowledge and awareness will often lead to a change of feeling); the musical demands of a work can't be fully addressed until the player can see them in the context of the composer's whole output; encourage students to develop the strong sense of conviction and the sense of self belief which is necessary for convincing performance, whilst retaining the humility and ability to criticise one's own shortcomings which are essential to any true artist.

DMITRI BASHKIROV: You mention 'intuition', which is *so* important! I have nothing against being well-informed, of course, but unfortunately today, many theoreticians and scholars, even quite a number of performers, seem to substitute 'knowledge' for imagination, reading everything, studying all the historical treatises and so on, while actually looking *down* on the whole concept of intuition and instinct. For me, an almost completely 'intuitive' and 'unscholarly' performance of a Scarlatti sonata by Horowitz can be so much more a revelation of the music and its possibilities than any number of the musicologically determined performances we so often hear today. They may be 'correct' but where is the miraculous revelation, the ideal of beauty, where is the magic?

JS: I have to say that a lot of ‘authentic’ performances (by no means all!) remind *me* of Alfred North Whitehead’s wonderful remark that ‘the merely well-informed man is the most useless bore on God’s earth’!

PETER FEUCHTWANGER: I agree very much with Yonty that we must stimulate and encourage students' interests in the other arts. Many musicians are too one-sided, with detrimental effect on their performance (some geniuses are exempt!); we need, too, to instil a sense of form and structure, to further students' comprehension of polyphony and encourage them to listen to the singers and instrumentalists of the golden age so they can benefit from an indispensable lost tradition.

BASHKIROV: With long-term pupils, I sometimes consider it my duty, after a while, not to confine my teaching strictly to music, but to point out, and sometimes to ‘correct’ certain personal qualities in students which may be having a direct and negative effect on what they do musically. But this should never be done in public, in a masterclass.

ANTON KUERTI: In public *or* in private, we must avoid ever humiliating or scolding students. They probably feel very inadequate and contrite anyway, if they haven’t pleased their teacher. And I agree with Murray about avoiding dogmatism. I always emphasise that there are countless possible ways of playing every phrase, and encourage students to choose from among them. But what about *you*? (Let’s interrogate the interrogator!). What are *your* principles?

JS: Mine?

KUERTI: I think it’s your turn.

JS: Well it’s not something I tend to formalise, in a Ten Commandments sort of way, but it was writing some of them down for a potential employer that actually gave me the idea for this symposium. And in that case, I did enumerate them.

1. I love teaching second only to music itself.
2. I’d rather teach an enthusiastic beginner than a blasé virtuoso any day.
3. I believe that the first duty of teachers is to render themselves superfluous as soon as possible.
4. Rather than laying down laws, I explain the fundamental principles behind all my recommendations, and try to arm all pupils not with cast-iron answers but with the right questions, and ways of discovering and exploring them.
5. I try (within reason, obviously) never to use the word 'no' or any other negative terminology. Likewise, I try and avoid the word 'should' in favour of 'might', 'can' and 'could'.
6. I ask everyone never to let *anything* go by that they don't understand. If they don't understand, it's because I haven't explained it well enough.
7. I stress to everyone that lessons are not performances, exams or trials (though they can be used that way when appropriate), that I’m there to help them by whatever means I can devise, and that the only one in the hotspot is me.
8. I urge them never to forget that music (and musical talent) is a joy, a gift and a privilege, not a virtue.
9. I point out that ours is the only activity in which one *plays a work*, and I demonstrate, through an exploration of the diatonic scale and its dynamic properties, the extent to which virtually all music, however serious or profound, is at one level a game - and that an understanding of the rules gives us most of what we need to know about interpretation. The greatest teacher remains the composer, even when, like Bach, he gives us nothing but the notes.
10. Whenever I see fit, I use humour and expressive caricature to demonstrate a point or a practising strategy, and I do everything I can to establish an environment and a set of

perspectives whereby nervousness, rivalry and comparison to others are unknown and irrelevant.

But back to you lot. Speaking specifically as teachers, what are some of your own guiding principles of *interpretation* - particularly as regards rhythm, which is the performer's largest responsibility (being the most imprecisely notatable of notatable elements, as well as the subtlest and ultimately the most definitive aspect of piano performance)?

KUERTI: I think if rhythmic irregularity is the result of negligence, bad habits or ignorance, every effort should be made to discourage it. But if it has a hint of something felt - something imaginative, deliberate and personal - it should be applauded, even if it's a bit exaggerated. Worn out and repetitive clichés, like semi-automatic delays across the barline should definitely be unmasked and lobbied against!

McLACHLAN: One has also to feel the inner pulse, the dynamism of a piece, organically - internally 'dancing' it, immersing oneself in the rhythmic 'swing', 'bounce' or 'glide' as the case may be. As always, this needs to be taken on board in the micro and macro perspectives, crucial not only to the overall conviction of the interpretation, but to concentration in performance. It's not enough to simply polish a performance for oneself or for 'consumption' in a drawing room. The challenges of performing in a vast arena (or indeed in any average recital hall) need interpretive skills similar to those required by professional actors on stage. My starting point, though, is always the text (or texts, since in many contexts one should explore different editions, looking at facsimiles, first editions etc.). Steeping oneself in the articulation markings, the dynamics, the written phrasing, is of fundamental importance. One also has obviously to feel the broad structure, to find climaxes, then all the smaller peaks. And virtually all of this can be done (and should be encouraged to be done!) away from the instrument.

ELTON: Rhythm is the lifeblood of music! If the blood stops in our veins we die. In music, a lack of rhythmic cohesion and direction has a similar result. But musicians should never forget that music is always more important than the performer. So the first and most important source of any interpretation, as Murray says, must be the text (though, interestingly, the greater the music, the more scope there is for breadth of interpretation).

RICHARD GOODE: The first focus *has* to be on the score, reading it accurately, taking into account *everything* in the notation, all the statements and hints of intention by the composer. This often entails a certain amount of pedantry, but it remains the basis of everything else - and usually a fine understanding of a work also means excellent score-reading.

MARK RAY: I agree, I'm sure we all do, about the primacy of the text. But it can only be a starting-place. I think the most frustrating and absorbing aspect of our job is how *little* notation can actually tell us - *particularly* where rhythm is concerned. To take just one example, think of the spectrum of interpretative possibilities lurking within dotted rhythms. And I can't help wondering, if notation *were* more precise, whether our artistic endeavours mightn't be the poorer for it! Anyway, one of the biggest challenges, I think, where rhythm is concerned, is to get *away* from mathematical or literal concepts of it.

GOODE: Another challenge, it seems to me, is knowing when to quiet the rhythmic impulse and keep it out of the foreground. I'm often annoyed by conductors who can't stop beating time, especially in small units, when the music positively demands to be heard as a large, unimpeded motion. There's a wonderful sense of harmonic space that can be evolved when the rhythm goes underground, so to speak. To give one example, in the first movement of the Fourth Beethoven

Concerto, the B-flat melody that floats in pianissimo, before the bridge to the second subject. Here the music must seem absolutely suspended in space, weightless – any rhythmic insistence would break the spell.

BALL: I think the problem with a lot of students is that they feel rhythm with their fingers, not inside, like a pulse or heartbeat. I often get them to *conduct* dodgy passages while I try and play to their beat. They get the message very quickly then! In fact I find the image of the pianist as conductor extremely helpful - as much in finding, blending and balancing colours as in controlling rhythmic procedures. Yes, the text *is* an imperfect key to unlock the door into a composer's psyche, but it's the only one we have, and a good musician will be passionate in pondering what every marking can tell us. Some students think this is pedantic and inhibiting and that they won't be able to 'express themselves'. One has to try and help them to see that on the contrary, the deepest consideration of the text will actually *liberate* their imagination and their responses to the music. I feel that every piano student should compose, however unoriginally. Just grappling with the issues of notating sounds in your head gives you a new perspective on other people's scores. I also believe that every student, every musician, should be playing the music of their contemporaries, and that their musical awareness will deteriorate, and their performances become stale, if they don't. If I have a real *bête noir*, it's pianists who play nothing but 19th century music (we're often not even talking 18th century!); I encourage my students to explore a wide and diverse repertoire. Choice of repertoire and programming says so much about a musical personality, before a note is played!

FEUCHTWANGER: Quite right! I ask students to study a lot of *Baroque* music (including Couperin, Rameau. etc.), to learn the art of *inégale* playing, ornamentation, overdotted and articulation (so important for understanding later composers such as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms and others), and above all, to learn how to vary repeats, and how to improvise; I like to work with students on the complete Schubert Dances, Chopin Mazurkas, Dvořák Waltzes, Smetana Polkas, and many other dances by the same and other composers. I think it's also very important to teach works of lesser known composers, since they reflect the style of their time far more than Haydn, or Schubert *et al*, who are always ahead of their time; I also like to work on the many neglected masterpieces by composers such as Weber and Mendelssohn, which are indispensable for enhancing the pianist's understanding of so-called 'warhorses'. I also like teaching through Schenkerian analysis, by which pupils can come to understand structure, harmony and rhythmical implications.

FINCH: Ives said in his *Memos* (at the time of writing the 'Concord' Sonata), 'These notes, marks, and near pictures of sounds etc. are in a kind of way a platform for the player to make his own speeches on.' This very much cuts against the idea of the musical score as sacred text, and is similar to Glenn Gould's view of the performer being in dialogue with the composer rather than in the role of servant. I don't think this means taking a flippant view of the text, nor does it imply arrogance on the part of the performer, or an intention to use the text as a vehicle for showing off. It *does* mean that the score is not the music, but an *indication* of the music, and the interpreter can communicate it directly to the audience through his or her own experience, rather than indirectly and passively.

WILLIAM FONG: One of the first decisions a student must make is to decide where the music is heading on a large scale. Rachmaninov famously believed that there's a critical point in every work, towards which the rest of the music is building. This clarity of musical direction then dictates the rhythm on all levels. Often a student's rhythmic waywardness is a result of a lack of *focus* on the dramatic content of the music. But I also think it's important not to learn a work in isolation. As with spoken language, immersing oneself in the native country is often the most

effective route to fluent speech with a convincing accent. If students comes into contact with the background of a work, they're more likely to present an interpretation with the inflections of its composers' particular musical language. Of course one can deduce a lot about the polonaise as a dance from the score of a Chopin Polonaise, but it helps enormously if you have some prior understanding of how a polonaise is danced!

SOLOMON: An aesthetically glorious, unpercussive piano is high on my list of priorities, along with the ability to conjure up richly diverse textures and colours that far transcend the usual annotated levels, from pianissimo to fortissimo. And a powerful sense of rhythm, flexible and alive, is fundamental. Everything about life and nature is about rhythm, breathing and growth. Every piece has its dynamic rhythmic flow, from beginning to end, and as usual there's no freedom without responsibility. Of course rubato and suppleness need to be cultivated to a high degree, but there are also many instances where a strictly controlled, *motoric* momentum is required.

JS: Absolutely! Who wants to hear a supple rubato in the second 'movement' of *The Rite of Spring* or the finale of the Prokofiev Seventh Sonata?! But we're so used to thinking of rhythmic interpretation two-dimensionally, in terms either of accent or of temporal displacement (rubato). Yet Bach, the danciest composer known to me, can be played with terrific buoyancy, dynamism and momentum without benefit of either – through the simple, infinitely subtle and endlessly exciting use of phrasing and articulation – or rather, phrasing *through* articulation. All that's needed is a recognition that in music, whose substance is sound, silence, however brief, invariably imparts an accent to the following note. A razor-thin sliver of silence is all that's needed to separate one group of notes from another. And through the deployment of these slivers, guided by the melodic cohesion or otherwise of successive notes, one can reveal beneath a foreground uniformity (think of the pages of Bach that have nothing but semiquavers) a marvellously varied, asymmetrical and galvanising rhythmic pattern, made up of contrasting *groups* of notes. This fact, coupled with the coercive power of the metric wave and the dynamic tensions of the scale, frequently renders first-beat accents by the pianist not only unnecessary but fatal to large-scale momentum. First-beats (dangerously referred to as 'downbeats'!) are at least as often ending-places as springboards. Nothing so easily murders music as the tyranny of metric uniformity!

O'HORA: Right. But it's vital, I think, to appreciate the interconnection of *all* the various elements that make up a convincing performance. The necessary pianistic command, intellectual grasp, stylistic empathy and emotional response should intermingle so closely that whilst it's perfectly possible, indeed necessary, to separate and temporarily isolate them in practising, the final goal is a whole greater than the sum of its parts. I'm sometimes sceptical about the word 'interpretation', which implies something separate from instrumental realisation. Because music exists only in sound, a wholly convincing performance depends on the degree to which musical ideas and their realisation in sound are truly one (a choice of tempo for instance may be convincing or not depending on whether the weight of sound and balance of texture appropriately match it).

JS: What are the commonest problems you encounter in pupils and how do you approach their solution?

SOLOMON: Accents! Too many accents incessantly, the imprisonment of barline metrical accentuation. Also, beginning a phrase with a bump and ending similarly is a problem needing constant attention. Overpedalling is commonly prevalent. Practicing often *senza pedale* is to be strongly recommended. Forced tone is a perennial problem, to be solved with finely-felt kinesthetic awareness, musculature balance and freedom of breathing. It's advisable to encourage

looking away from the keyboard and one's hands. In fact practising with eyes closed is very illuminating.

KUERTI: Again, with Yonty: too many mechanical, thoughtless *accents*, especially on the downbeats! Since every note played on the piano creates a sort of accent, it's crucially important that they be controlled and compared to each other. Another common problem, as Jeremy implied, is a failure to articulate, or to understand articulation. But then some of our most famous artists have the same problem! And then there's a general lack of musical hygiene – i.e. simply not reading the music precisely, notes too short or too long, dynamics ignored, incorrect rhythms etc.

WATERMAN: And of course that leads to the lack of cantabile and the stodgy rhythm we hear so often (playing in time is all very well, but you have to understand where you're going!) - and here dynamics, such as crescendo and decrescendo are very important. Many young pianists become louder as soon as they see a crescendo and begin a decrescendo with something that's almost a *subito piano*. Without careful structuring of dynamic levels you'll miss the climaxes. And if you overreach your sound-level, you sacrifice your tone as well.

NORMA FISHER: More common than anything else, it seems to me, is the lack of a real connection with the keyboard. In order to convey the inner depths and spirituality of the music, the majority of young pianists need to be taught how to use their fingers and body in a way that brings them closer to the musical end they're (hopefully) seeking. We're the only instrumentalists who don't actually 'hold' our instrument. This distance from the instrument has to be narrowed and can only really be achieved, *I think*, if that inner connection with sound and line is truly desired (the ears, of course, are also enormously involved here). An over relaxed hand and general approach produces an indifferent sound. Of course the wrist and arm *behind* the hand have to be relaxed enough to prevent unwanted tension, and there are wonderful exercises to achieve this, especially Cortot's *Rational Principles*, which are superb

FOWKE: And then there are also problems of repertoire. I often find students tackling works inappropriate to their present level of attainment, and their knowledge of repertoire in general is often limited. There's often a general lack of technical grounding too, an inability to improvise (or even daring to experiment at the keyboard), and poor sightreading. The whole science or craft of practising is often only dimly perceived; repetition (usually loud!) is often the basic approach, with slow practice intended but soon abandoned. Pedalling is little understood, and seldom practised or explored. Pianists seem to have an epic lack of interest in the actual instrument, its construction, mechanism and servicing requirements. I really think all students should have a simple course in this, with supervised practical experience of tuning, regulating and voicing.

McMAHON: I too often encounter insufficient technical grounding, likewise a lack of *harmonic* understanding. For a pianist an inability to think harmonically, *and* polyphonically, is a major drawback, since we constantly have to operate both vertically and horizontally.

FEUCHTWANGER: In more than 40 years of teaching, the greatest problem I've encountered is a lack of body awareness. In their ungainly behaviour at the keyboard, many pianists have forgotten the simplest, most natural and functional movements. As we know from some very famous artists, this can lead to physical problems (at worst the complete loss of the use of one hand). Another problem, as Murray mentioned earlier, is that students don't listen to themselves enough. Very often they play much too loud, without the slightest knowledge of how to produce a beautiful forte. A further problem involves an inability to read the text accurately, not

understanding the correct meaning of each individual musical symbol, and often using bad editions.

JS: How flexible do you feel yourselves to be, as teachers, in your approach to technique?

ELTON: How does one quantify degrees of flexibility? So much depends on the individual students, their ages etc. It's quite different setting out to build a technique in a young player (or even – if absolutely unavoidable – rebuilding one, if they're not too old.) Of course there are indisputables: the whole balance between relaxation and tension is vital. Without some tension – even if it's a finger joint - there can be no control, no real sound. And one can only find arm/wrist/ body balance, release of tension and so on if the fingers are really firm. I'm convinced that all the great pianists and teachers who talk so rightly and eloquently about relaxation have done so with the assumption that the fingers were totally reliable, independent - and strong.

BALL: There *has* to be flexibility, because technique is a means of realising a musical intention. If the intention is unclear, it's by definition unrealisable. Every person's musical intentions are different, therefore everyone needs a different technique. Good technical teaching is indivisible from good musical teaching. *And* from teaching ways of practicing.

SOLOMON: I recommend a holistic approach. Obviously one needs to 'strengthen' and hypersensitise the fingers (especially the fleshy, richly-nerved cushions so ideally suited to a warm cantabile sound), to develop good pianistic habits (economy of movement, practical hand-positions, proximity to the keys, instead of lifting the hands unnecessarily), as well as an acute sensory awareness of the body and its structural stasis in performance. Devising imaginative technical exercises on relevant patterns within the music is wiser than mindless repetition of certain sections. I encourage, too, mirror-version exercises *à la* Rudolf Ganz, and the transposition of entire studies and pieces into every key (perfect for Bach and the Chopin Etudes!). I've never been a devotee of Hanon and Czerny, but these, along with Cramer and Clementi, can be effective stepping-stones to Brahms-Paganini, Liszt and more advanced technical work.

JS: What are the principles governing your approaches to fingering? And to your teaching of it?

WATERMAN: Well fingering's where it all starts, isn't it. And fingering starts with thought. What is the musical *purpose* or *character* of the notes or phrases? What fingering will serve to bring these out? The idea that an easy fingering is necessarily the best is mistaken. The best fingering is the one that will best bring out the musical *meaning* - almost in spite of the performer.

JS: Like many of Schnabel's fingerings, which are almost literally foolproof. But what I find really extraordinary is the number of artists, let alone students, who even overlook the fingerings of the composer himself. There's one particularly intriguing and challenging fingering in Beethoven's Op 110, which no fewer than three distinguished Beethovenians confessed to me they'd never noticed! And there are certainly times (in the 'Hammerklavier', for instance, so full of struggle) when a 'facilitation' would be downright unmusical, emasculating the musical message.

BASHKIROV: But whatever you say about the fingers (or the arms and body), it's with the head and the mind and the ear that *real* technique originates. Unfortunately many young pianists get this the wrong way round, treating technique as a purely physical phenomenon. I often tell my pupils that they should play the piano not with their fingers and their feet but with their ears. This degree of 'mental control', however, is something which can usually be most profitably discussed above a certain level of attainment, both physical and intellectual.

SOLOMON: I'm unashamedly in favour of Chopin's ideas on fingering as well as the frequent use of substitution fingering (changing fingers on one note to lengthen the sound). Practising scales with only the C major fingering is salubrious and often gives clues to the sensible fingering of difficult, notey passages. I use the thumb a great deal to achieve a certain depth of sonority. Ensure that the fifth fingers of both hands sound properly, and don't be afraid to use several fingers together or even the entire hand on just one note!

ELTON: I insist on students having workable and systematic fingerings but I'm not dogmatic about their using mine! They often have very different hands. To practice a passage with two different fingerings is, in effect, (physically) to practise two different passages. This is both time-consuming and dangerous, since one might fall between two stools in concert! There are some students who seem not to have any very clear concepts of fingering and they have to have certain parameters set out for them – but I usually do this as and when it occurs.

McLACHLAN: At the earliest stage there are fundamental truths about finding patterns, keeping things clear and lucid, minimising thumb shifts etc. And of course one has to fit in with the physical capabilities of particular hands. Ultimately, though, one looks at creative, artistically viable solutions, and trains students to be sensitive rather than merely practical when devising fingerings.

FINCH: I think it's important to bear in mind, too, not just the particular sequences of fingers but also the *position* of the fingers: high, low, curved, flat; at the front, back or middle of the key; pushing back, pulling forward or going straight down and so on.

FEUCHTWANGER: The correct fingerings result from the understanding of a phrase bringing about a certain motion. The correct motion produce the correct fingerings, the correct fingering produces the correct motion (it's the old chicken or egg conundrum!).

FOWKE: Enjoy finding patterns, explore mirror fingering, aim for strong fingers on strong beats. Don't be afraid of the thumb, especially on black notes! Always finger in such a way as to prepare the fingers for movements, positions and leaps ahead. Finger for sound. Finger for memory. Finger for rhythm. Above all, experiment. Hone, improve, explore. Question the conventional, and *always* question editors' recommendations. And don't be afraid of redistribution where it won't compromise the musical, tonal or stylistic content.

JS: How much does the solution of 'technical' problems lie in musical understanding?

FISHER: Musical focus is paramount. So many pupils are concerned with technical problems divorced from their musical *raison d'etre*. As Dmitri said, their focus is solely on the 'hurdle' and its insurmountability! But the problems virtually disappear and the 'road opens' when the problems are seen within a musical context. Even the most difficult passages, given a musical motivation become not only approachable, but achievable.

KUERTI: But all the musical understanding in the world, without mechanical insights and abilities, won't result in mastering difficulties like those in the second étude from Chopin's Op 10 or the double-thirds of Op 25.

FOWKE: Of course not. I think there can be a dangerous *over*-reliance on musical understanding as a solution for technical problems. I tend to find that the more groundwork done, the more 'comfortability' one finds (if there is such a word!), the more will musical freedom be released.

One should avoid becoming technically obsessed, but so often students' undoubted musical enthusiasm, even insight, are seriously compromised by the simple fact that they haven't adequately mastered the notes (having *inadequately* explored or excavated the purely pianistic challenges – *which do exist!*).

JS: As Rudolf Serkin once said, with brutal realism, 'What does it matter how deeply you feel the slow movement of the Beethoven Fourth if you have no trill?'

SOLOMON: I think you can only really talk here in generalities. Of *course* musical comprehension is useful but there are other, often chronic factors that come into play when 'technical' problems arise – stiffness or awkwardness physically, weak unstructured fingers, locked or fixed wrists, holding one's breath, too much force on the keys and so on.

JS: What is your approach to exercises, as distinct from studies?

WATERMAN: Well *I* don't *use* exercises, and I don't believe in practising scales. I do believe in taking 'exercises' directly from the pieces. And not whole phrases, but the awkward little corners that have to be negotiated. Reduce the problem to its essence.

KUERTI: Basically, I hate exercises, but at a certain stage they can be helpful. But I do think scales, practised militantly with a large variety of accentuations and rhythms, are an important rite of passage, and to a lesser degree, arpeggios, chords and octaves too.

FOWKE: I used to recommend, so long as they weren't Hanon and all in C major (and fast!) They suit some and not others. These days I'm more interested in stimulating students to be inventive and to discover their own. And again, always ask questions. Why only an octave apart? Why ascending first? Why forte? etc.

McLACHLAN: I think, firstly, one has to find guidelines and points of *principle* to articulate and experiment with at the keyboard. Next, one extends this and becomes more fluent with them by using exercises. Finally, one builds up stamina and musical context of the 'problem' by effortlessly displaying all that you've learnt through the 'showcase' of a study. This can be seen easily with double thirds: Tackle the issue in a lesson with your teacher, then 'doodle' a bit with them, revising all that was discussed. Next, try out the Brahms exercise in thirds, look at the chapter on double notes in Cortot's *Rational Principles*, then, and only then, when things begin to fall into place, tackle Chopin op.25 no.6

FINCH: I admire the way Cortot takes a larger technical problem (in his edition of the Chopin Études, for instance) and breaks it down into smaller exercises. It's a principal I certainly follow myself, without necessarily following his suggestions to the letter.

SOLOMON: I agree. I think it's vital to follow Cortot's example in the treatment of *all* specific technical challenges, and like Fanny, I like to devise for students relevant exercises, moulded around patterns in the actual piece, which I then urge them to transpose into other keys, play at different speeds, using different touches and so on. The possibilities are endless, and a wonderful challenge! Like Philip, I also encourage pupils to create their own along these lines. General, warming up exercises are beneficial too, and though are a number of books featuring these, I think, again, that it's a good idea to supplement or even replace them with one's own.

FOWKE: Exercises are fine if they're approached imaginatively and creatively. I encourage students to 'interpret' them as they would a piece of music, and to improvise on them – but never

do too many, and start in random keys, if only to avoid the gravitational pull of C major. And I'd add to Yonty's suggestions the *combining* of different dynamics and touches in each hand.

FEUCHTWANGER: I've devised many special exercises in order to overcome physical problems, and to acquire a functional and natural approach to piano-playing. These I use solely to cure physical problems before introducing various studies by Hummel, Czerny, Moscheles, Chopin, Alkan, Henselt, Liszt, Debussy and others. Even my most successful students start their day with these exercises before working on repertoire.

JS: Is 'evenness', do you think (as opposed to smoothness and clarity), a false virtue? Chopin certainly thought so.

FINCH: And I agree with him, absolutely. I even think that the very *notion* of evenness helps to promote a lot of useless, boring practise. I ask my students to practise scales smoothly but *unevenly* – that's to say, the feeling of legato is created by a continuum of tension and release, as in the structure of any diatonic scale.

FEUCHTWANGER: Absolutely. As in speech, there is *no* evenness. That's one reason why I stress the importance of learning the Baroque art of *inéga*le playing, which is indispensable for the correct rubato.

KUERTI: I'd say that the *ability* to play evenly is *certainly* a true virtue. To apply it relentlessly without regard to the local climate, however, is demeaning to the music

SOLOMON: Of course. I do think Chopin was perfectly correct in his recognition that fingers are differently structured, and differently sited in the hand, and that these differences add kinesthetic properties which actually moulds our attitude to the keys. But I think evenness is also an *essential* ingredient to strive for in scales, arpeggios, certain études in the repertoire etc., and the relationship of the outer to the inside fingers requires a natural and instinctive balance. Every finger is a singer, lets face it, and no two voices are utterly alike.

JS: I've often wondered if there's any instrument that requires attention to quite so many strands, so many details, so many minute variations of touch, time, tone and so on as the piano. And I was very interested to hear the opinion of one world-class neurologist that playing the piano, certainly at a professional level, is the most complex neurological activity ever designed by the human mind. No wonder we pianists have to practise longer, harder, more multi-facetedly than any other instrumentalists. No wonder we're exhorted by parents and teachers to practise, practise, practise. Yet relatively few of us were ever taught (or taught adequately) *how* to practise. What, for you, as a teacher, is the ideal practice regimen?

SOLOMON: Aha! Now this is a minefield! Anton Rubinstein's [Theodor Leschetizky's?] dictum 'think ten times, play once' is a truism, and I very much recommend working away from the piano. Mental rehearsal sharpens one's sensory aural input without the 'distraction' of actually playing. Memorisation away from the piano likewise needs to be encouraged and taught. But all pupils are different, and in the end one needs to guide each to the manner and duration of practicing which suits them best.

ELTON: Teaching how to practise is often, in effect, the main focus of a lesson. But practise should start with warm up – then perhaps some études or scales (depending on the player). It's important to vary the 'type' of practice, as this helps to maintain concentration. (for instance, some new note-learning, some fine polishing, some technical work, some memorising etc.). Avoid

too much heavy or 'stretchy' practice at a time, and be sure to get up every now and then. Too many pianists seem to be determined to risk RSI!

McLACHLAN: The ideal regimen, for me, is one which combines creativity with clarity and goes straight to the root of the problem (often simply the connection of two notes in isolation) rather than wasting time playing a whole line over and over again). And there should always be a calmness and lack of fluster.

FEUCHTWANGER: The first thing I ask my students to do is to read through the score (here, of course, the good sight reader has a great advantage) before working on various technical difficulties. Further, I ask them to transpose the piece into every key, to play with the left hand what's written for the right hand, and *vice versa*, to play the piece with crossed hands (not necessary in the correct tempo), to choose the most 'musical' fingerings, so that by transposing the piece you're no longer dependent on any one fingering. I'm very much against *loud* practising because if you practice softly you listen far better to yourself. Keep the music foremost in your mind at all times, and *always* practise with a beautiful sound.

JS: One of the practising stages that I recommend very strongly is to tie all repeated notes (as opposed to Scarlattian or Ravelian 'repeated-notes') and play *only* those which represent a new event in the immediate pitch-pattern. This has two functions: it gives an excellent 'aerial' photograph of where the 'action' really is (at once freeing melodic inflection from metrical divisiveness - and revealing one of the main secrets of playing 'rubato in strict time!'), and it greatly reduces, through that awareness alone, the technical difficulty of many passages. A good example is the rapid-fire chord sequence in bars 33-40 of Variation IX in Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes* - and here I do recommend incorporating the strategy in actual performance. If you *actually* tie all the repeated notes, not only do you release the underlying 'long-short-long' pattern, thereby enhancing the buoyancy and grace of the rhythm, you also find that the hitherto daunting technical difficulty of the passage has disappeared almost entirely, to the benefit of all concerned (player, music and listener).

FOWKE: The craft of practising develops over a period of time. What I did 30 years ago certainly isn't what I do now! One learns a kind of economy. Ultimately, it's a question of making the best possible use of time. Like so many things, practice needs to be orderly, structured and methodical, but this doesn't preclude its being fun. From my earliest lessons, I was fortunate in having a wonderfully gifted teacher, Marjorie Withers, who instilled in me the joy of experimenting at the keyboard, making simple exercises for tricky passages, and constantly discovering new ways of doing things. I'm particularly interested in how students approach the instrument and prepare themselves before a practice session. With this in mind, I recommend body exercises, stretching, swaying, limbering shoulder movements, whatever they can manage and is appropriate to their age and build. I sometimes suggest that students imagine the piano (a grand) to be a warm pool in which they're lazily and enjoyably swimming. In practising (a word I actually try to avoid), the questions 'what?' 'why?' and 'how?' are uppermost. Every repetition needs to be a development of the previous one. Gordon Green used to say that 'you mustn't practise till you get it right, you must practise it till you never get it wrong!' A subtle but profoundly different emphasis!

KUERTI: Yes. And I agree absolutely about learning to *enjoy* one's practising. It's very important, too, I think, to practise the emotions and the character of the music. I oppose excessively slow practice (a bit may be necessary from time to time), and I don't advocate practising hands alone - or practising for more than 30 seconds with the metronome, and I regard practising with distorted rhythms and evil accentuation as being musically destructive. There may

be a gain in efficiency through some of these oppressive methods, but I'd rather practise six hours and love it, making it into a sort of meditation session that brings me closer to the music, than accomplish the same progress in two and hate it like vile tasting medicine, thus becoming alienated from the music, and learning to feel negative every time I approach the keyboard.

JS: But slow practising isn't an 'oppressive method', any more than Adagios are! And there's no need for it to be negative in any way. In one very important sense, I maintain that musical truth is a stranger to tempo. And I'm not talking here about emotional or spiritual truth, but a musical truth that transcends mood altogether. What I mean is that an upbeat is an upbeat and an afterbeat is an afterbeat, no matter what the tempo - and that the means of clarifying rhythmic function are the same at any tempo. Often composers will write in such a way that only one interpretation (one *rhythmic* interpretation) is possible. But just as often they don't. And it's in the control (though not necessarily the avoidance) of ambiguity that I think the greatest challenge to the interpreter arises. A very large part of the musical expression, of the *character* of the music, depends on the crucial relationship of that rhythmical trinity, the upbeat, beat and afterbeat. They're the only rhythmic states we have - symbolically representing future, present and past (anticipation-achievement-relaxation; hope-fulfilment-rest; activity-stasis-passivity etc.), perfectly if not very poetically represented in the sound of the Spanish word *tortilla* (tor-**TEE**ya) with its implicit short-long rhythm - as in the last of Schubert's *Moments musicaux*, the finale of Beethoven's Op 10 No 3 and countless other pieces (we also use too many 'consonants' in piano-playing, and make too little distinction between them: ta-**DEE**ya is different from 'tortilla' is different from 'papaya' etc.). All of these relationships can be heard and controlled best at a slow tempo (the slower you play, the more you'll be forced to inflect if you want to keep the music moving - and this, like speech, involves the close juxtaposition of extreme dynamic contrasts, which won't *sound* like that). The pianist who masters the rhythmic-expressive requirements of a *molto adagio* will find allegros a piece of cake. The principles are the same. Only the speed is different.

FINCH: I'm not a 'method' man, but I like to suggest a combination of different approaches to the same problem - *i.e.* very slow practise to concentrate on the micro-level, as it were, with very fast practise (especially sometimes in slow movements!) to concentrate on the macro-level; singing while playing; silent practise; over-kill methods (doubling the distance of jumps for instance), etc. And a *part* of practise time, at least, should be devoted to practising *performing* (to an imaginary audience, or even for a friend or two).

JS: I'm glad to hear you say that, because it's my experience that playing and performing, while obviously very closely related, are significantly different skills. How much (and how) is it possible to train a pupil, within the context of a lesson, in the art of public performance?

KUERTI: I think the lesson *is* a sort of performance, and often one which creates more anxiety in students than even a concert, at which one is at least not exposed to immediate criticism. So it provides a regular chance to test one's self-confidence and ability to deliver.

WATERMAN: Exactly. I begin every lesson by having the pupil play the whole movement through without any interruption (no going back if you make a mistake, as in practising; in a performance you *must* go on). So we *start* with the *experience* of performance - and then turn to the details.

McMAHON: One can (and should) constantly discuss the piece, and the performance, as if in various performing situations. The need for greater projection in a large hall is obvious, as are considerations of timing and the varied use of pedal in differing acoustics. One should always be

listening to the sound produced in an almost detached way - as if one were an observer from outside oneself, and this becomes ever more useful as you experience different acoustics, instruments and situations (a recording studio or a large hall, chamber music or accompanying, concerto playing etc.). All of these and many others can be discussed in the context of a lesson.

McLACHLAN: Well there are many different kinds of lessons, and one of the dangers of teaching, I think, is that it can become too obsessive in terms of microscopic detail. Of course this is often essential in the early stages of learning a piece, but later on it's important for the tutor to view the performance as an oil painting rather than as a water colour. It's very helpful to get out into a concert hall and hear what students sounds like from beyond the footlights. In any case there's a lot that can be suggested, even from the water colour perspective, about the art of projection and communication to a large audience.

SOLOMON: I generally like to include in lessons the eventual motivation towards a public performance, polishing and refining details to that goal. We discuss the acoustical properties of various concert venues which govern our chosen sound and pedaling, also the vital projection towards the entire size of the hall, the importance of underlining details, phrasing, employing a rich spectrum of colours and nuance. In other words, to bring the lesson context into the context of a public performance with audience, space and the spontaneous excitement of the magic of the moment.

FOWKE: This is an enormous subject. The art of preparation, the degree of self-knowledge, the awareness of one's vulnerability, must always be subjects for discussion. I often say to students that there's as much to talk about as there is to play. A lesson is the engine room where we put on boiler suits, grapple with the machinery, and risk getting filthy in the process. Every nut and bolt, piston and lever, needs intimate acquaintance and regular servicing. It's never wise to assume that a piece of unchecked machinery will perform under duress. Very often it won't. Nothing must be left to chance. To quote Gordon Green again, 'Your good must be so good, that your second best will do'. It's this level of preparation, and the humility and hard work to achieve it, that must be the ethos of every lesson.

BALL: The challenge of helping students who never do themselves justice under pressure is a particularly important one. I feel we should be learning a lot from actors in searching to channel adrenalin usefully. There's the whole question of 'what emotions should I experience when I'm performing?' The music may be portraying neurotic frenzy but if we feel frenzied and neurotic as we perform, the results are unlikely to be very satisfying. We have to develop the 'objectifying' technique of an actor who portrays a character having a nervous breakdown for two hours, and then has a relaxed drink in the pub with you afterwards. Of course, some of the greatest pianists (Sofronitsky and Argerich, for instance) are those who dare to 'go to the edge', to expose themselves with a white heat that can take a terrible personal toll. This is awesome to witness, but a little unhealthy as a way of helping your students!

JS: How can we approach the solution, or at least the minimising, of stage fright?

KUERTI: First by setting a reasonable goal. If the goal is to play perfectly from the first to the last note, that's very hard to achieve and sets you up for potential failure even when the last note has almost been reached. If the goal, on the other hand, is to play at least one phrase with such overwhelming beauty that someone will feel 'this makes life worthwhile', you could in theory achieve your goal fairly early on and maybe even several times during the performance - and having achieved it, your anxiety should diminish and your playing improve still further. If you can move yourself, then the music *itself* can become the focus, and your relative personal success

or failure takes on a secondary importance. It's also very helpful, at times when one feels really comfortable with one's playing when practising, to observe very carefully one's body position, weighting, tensions or lack thereof etc., and then try to mimic that in performance. Though it's not easy for the mind to control itself, the body, if it can find its ideal configuration, can *influence* the mind and help it regain the ease and focus it had during its best moments. Being well prepared, of course, does help a bit! I wouldn't like to go on stage unable to think through a piece without moving my fingers.

McLACHLAN: There are lots of useful tips and asides one can give, plenty of practices to avoid, and others to encourage. Every individual will vary in this respect, (in my own case I'll be more nervous if I sleep less than I should, take coffee, don't practice before a concert, talk constantly to people immediately before going onstage, and eat lots of chocolate on the day of the concert. I'll be less nervous if I get lots of practice and sleep, eat lots of fruit but not much else, and keep quiet before stepping onstage). But ultimately, assuming that enough practice has been done, it's the ability to develop a pupil's *concentration* which will resolve stomach butterflies of the worst kind.

FOWKE: Part of preparation which students often overlook, is practising performance itself, as Douglas mentioned earlier. Play the programme many times to small gatherings, fellow students, friends, parents. Organise small concerts. Get the shaky playing over, then go to the audition, exam or concert. As regards memory, have 'starting places' at strategic points. In a crisis, don't go back, go forward. Keep reasonably fit, and have plenty of sleep, and follow Murray's example. No late nights and a sensible diet - though I personally admit just the occasional glass of wine!

SOLOMON: We're mostly nervous when we feel inadequately prepared, but unfortunately other factors come into play as well. There are many stresses along the way that either heighten or blemish our perception of performance. One needs to learn how to physically relax, breathe, and regulate one's heart-rhythms for calm control. The Feldenkrais Method is very helpful, though less well known in Britain than the Alexander Technique. Regular exercise, including (gently) the morning before performance, is certainly beneficial. Then there are other more modern possibilities such as neuro-feedback and mental rehearsal, which add a further element of confidence and self-assurance.

FINCH: Enjoy the preparation so you enjoy the performance. When you daydream, imagine the act of performing in the most positive, exciting and pleasurable light. Imagine approaching the piano with its smiling keyboard, imagine the sensuality of the keys, the beautiful sounds produced, the kinesthetic sense of motion, of flight. To help build a background of self-esteem, perform at schools, at weddings and funerals, in senior citizens' homes - anywhere where music is naturally received as a gift rather than consumed and criticised as a product. I believe that if one approaches an audience with this attitude, then they in turn take on the attitude themselves and are more open to the music being offered. Of course there's a lot of 'self-help' out there, one of the most interesting, I believe, being Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP).

WATERMAN: Unlike Anton, I strongly recommend memorising the separate hands, especially the left hand. Another thing is to cultivate all three main memory types: visual, tactile, musical - first singly, then in combination.

FEUCHTWANGER: You can never be over-prepared. Pianists who can transpose the piece being performed into every key, to play any voice (for instance in a fugue) with one finger, to play right hand passages with the left hand and *vice versa* (and who can switch, on the spur of the moment, to different fingerings than those planned and practised) are much less likely to have memory lapses, and will therefore conquer their stage fright to a great extent.

JS: Why is it, do you think, that so many piano teachers been so notoriously, disproportionately and gratuitously cruel (Leschetizky, Vengerova, Henselt, Vogel etc.)?

KUERTI: Probably revenge for abuse they themselves suffered as students.

FOWKE: It really grieves me that this phenomenon exists even today. It was once a kind of fashion, which grew, I suspect, from a profound vulnerability and intrinsic lack of confidence. I wouldn't discount envy either. Bullies always crave power but are cowards beneath.

BALL: Teaching of all types attracts a few psychos, unfortunately. I've heard one or two masterclasses where I've had to restrain myself from going to the 'master' and saying, 'Look, why don't you deal with these personal issues and problems that you so clearly have in the peace and quiet of your shrink's consulting room, rather than inflicting them on all of us?' But we do have to beware of the tendency for teaching to give us delusions of grandeur. There's never any excuse for not treating a student with the respect and human dignity with which one should approach anyone. Of course, being utterly demanding, to a degree that may be very uncomfortable for students, is something else entirely and absolutely valid... as long as one is equally demanding of oneself.

SOLOMON: I think the greatest and most unforgivable harm one can do as a teacher is to be impatient or emotionally destructive with a student. One needs to be diplomatic, discreet, always encouraging, and mature in one's criticism. Occasionally some irritating impatience may creep into the situation of a volatile lesson. But to lose one's temper is a luxury one cannot afford in teaching. Ultimately, the lesson is not about the professor – it's about students, and the music itself. Happily, the educational climate today is rather different from those self-indulgent eras of tantrums and screaming at pupils. Gently given advice, empathetic regard for students' abilities is paramount, as well as firmness and warm encouragement. Driving a student to tears may work for some, but I prefer a kinder, gentler approach, while at the same time making clear the responsibilities, standards and ideals for bringing out the best in ourselves. We've all had stormy lessons differing on the Richter scale (apologies to Sviatoslav!), and these exceptional instances we remember well and hope not to repeat. They can be very destructive indeed. Nothing in the profession gives anyone the right to unleash on students their own frustrations, of whatever ilk.

FINCH: One's belief in music can be so strong that it *can* lead to harshness against those who may appear not to treat it with due respect. This I can at least understand, though not condone. But cruelty for the sake of personal control, often arising from jealousy, is utterly reprehensible.

RAY: I'd be very interesting to know whether the cruelty was felt to be more painful by the recipients in a private lesson or in a masterclass - and whether certain teachers become more cruel when they have an audience to 'appreciate' their cruelty.

JS: Well as Andrew says, teaching of all types attracts a few psychos – not least, I suspect, because of its potential for power, and for the abuse of it. But there are other temptations for abuse as well. Where do the greatest dangers in teaching lie?

McLACHLAN: In becoming a law giver. Thinking that there's only one 'right', and opting for formulaic solutions. Forgetting that every pupil is a special case.

FEUCHTWANGER: . . . and in the vanity and ego of the teacher, making students dependent instead of giving him/her their all-important freedom!

BALL: Making students dependent on you is not an option. I'm afraid my comments on *those* teachers are unprintable!

SOLOMON: Perhaps in possessiveness, too, and a jaded, tired approach to certain less gifted, or slower pupils, repeating oneself boringly.

FOWKE: The greatest dangers, it seems to me, lie not so much in teaching as in the teacher. There are 'ambitious' teachers who peddle their wares in the form of competition results, and in lists of 'successful students'. By enticing gifted students into their fold, they can then lay claim (often fraudulently) to shaping their talent. Real teaching is so much more than this, and I know there are many devoted teachers around who get on with their work, humbly accepting all ranges of ability, and having no thought for their own gain, professionally or financially. It's an *enormous* responsibility to be in a position of influence in a young person's development. I try to be patient, to listen, to allow students, without interruption, to present such work as they've done, to treat them and their response to music seriously, to encourage discussion. I avoid making markings in students' scores as I see that as being intrusive and presumptuous. They're quite old enough to make their own markings. It dismays me to see scores with wavy lines, shooting arrows and the ubiquitous circle, the usual teacher's graffiti.

JS: I know teachers who've scrawled with bright-coloured wax crayons in big letters and symbols all over their students' scores, thus ruining them for anyone else (and the cost of replacements is often prohibitive!). If I make any markings at all, it's in very light pencil and I encourage their erasure as soon as possible, on the invaluable principle – I think it's a Russian proverb – that 'we learn in order to forget'. The place for markings is in the mind, not on the page. But I also object to the innumerable editorial fingerings which disfigure many otherwise excellent editions (Henle, for instance), partly because they're distracting, and inhibiting of original thought by the player, but mainly because so many of them are so unthinkingly conventional and show no real understanding of truly idiomatic piano-playing. But back to this question about dangers: I would cite as another the wilful involvement of teachers in the private lives of their pupils.

BASHKIROV: I agree. But the relationship between teacher and pupil over an extended period of time is nevertheless of a certain intimacy, which should never be forced by the teacher. Absolute trust between teacher and pupil is essential, and this can never be established on a lasting basis if the teacher is too manipulative. And there is always the danger, as Peter and Andrew have pointed out, of instilling in pupils a certain dependency, something we must always guard against. I myself got 'burnt' by this quite a few times in my earlier career.

JS: To what extent can teaching be taught?

McLACHLAN: Probably to a great extent, and excellent institutions such as the Associated Board and EPTA are now well into developing courses for this very purpose. The conservatoires too are now much more pro-active about 'The Art of Teaching'. At the end of the day, though, it's grass-roots experience which counts for most, and nothing can be a substitute for hands-on teaching.

McMAHON: You can certainly lay down clear principles, but it's true that much of one's teaching is probably based on one's *own* experience as a *pupil*, but you learn most from teaching itself (and not just about how to teach! You also learn how to perform. The two are inextricably linked).

JS: When Schnabel (along, I'm sure, with many other people) said 'I have learned more from my pupils than they can ever have learned from me', I think he left out one vital word. What he actually meant, surely (and what I suspect all of us have experienced ourselves) was that he had learned more from *teaching* his pupils. Teaching is a unique source of infinite musical discovery, you discover things that don't happen when it's just you at the keyboard, things that you never noticed or possibly even thought about in works you may have played for decades. In a truly just world, I sometimes think, it should be we who pay our pupils!

SOLOMON: Teaching is absolutely about learning, for both professor and student. As long as we learn, we can teach; as long as we teach, we learn. New ideas, energy, new approaches are vital, of course - but so is keeping the historical and fundamental truths of great pianism alive and well, and living in this new century.

JS: Is individuality something that can (or should) be taught?

KUERTI: It can certainly be encouraged, and at least one should try not to *discourage* it, which is what usually happens.

McLACHLAN: If teachers take the view that they're 'drawing out' what's already there rather than 'drumming-in', if the attitude is taken of cherishing and celebrating the unique qualities of each student, if a flexible methodology and open-minded enthusiasm is present, then in theory it should be impossible to 'clone-teach'. Most vitally, *away* from the instrument, encouragement should be given to anything that expands a pupil's culture: reading, appreciating the other arts, travelling, celebrating the world around us, and all the characters within it. Some would also say, as Andrew and Philip have both said here, that the ability to compose and/or improvise, even if only modestly, is a valuable means of really feeling music from within, rather than merely obeying instructions.

JS: When considering your career and performance as a teacher, is there anything you regret?

KUERTI: Answering these questions!

FOWKE: Not knowing, when I began, what I know now!

McMAHON: I don't look backwards too much, so I find this quite hard to answer. I imagine I could perhaps have been more methodical in the application of technical study in my teaching over the years. I've seen other teachers achieve fine results using a very methodical approach.

McLACHLAN: As Yonty said, you never stop learning as a teacher, and obviously this means that you would approach things completely differently now than you would have a few years (or even a few weeks!) back. Equally, it means that things will be totally different in the future. But that, in fact, is the nature of teaching the piano. Therefore, look forward, never back!

BASHKIROV: Look *both* ways! We learn from our experience, which is in the past. I *do* look back, and I think that in one very important way, I was mistaken in my original approach. Over the past few decades, I have come more and more to the conclusion that the teacher should *demonstrate* comparatively little at the piano but *explain* more. Yes, use the piano, of *course*, but mainly in small snippets, to demonstrate a particular kind of sonority or a kind of movement, something like that. But imitation is not learning. One sees it again and again, very talented young pianists who do very well in competitions and in the beginning of their careers, but then fall

by the wayside when they leave their teachers and often find themselves feeling helpless to help themselves.

JS: And what have been your most memorable and enduring rewards?

FOWKE: The pleasure and privilege of working with young people.

SOLOMON: The revelations of how things can be improved, and the sheer enjoyment when they're happy, fulfilled and successful in their work and life.

McMAHON: The immense luxury of doing what I love most for a living, whether as a performer or teacher. I never really expected this and it's a constant surprise and pleasure to find myself so engrossed in what I do!

McLACHLAN: It's wonderful to guide, and be guided in one's guiding! To feel that one has had a small part in the development of any individual, for a short or a longer time. By being a part of someone else's 'progress', one becomes less selfish, less stilted and more creative.

FEUCHTWANGER: Witnessing the success of deserving students – and realising that your teaching has been instrumental in their reaching this goal. And above all, to be moved by one's pupil's performance.

BASHKIROV: Whether for good or not, I don't know, but the older I get the more dissatisfied I get with myself as a pianist, almost self-destructively so, but I'm very proud and happy as a teacher. And it gives me the greatest satisfaction when I read reviews or articles commenting that none of my pupils play like each other, or like me. I attribute this precisely to the change I mentioned in the balance of my approach, from demonstration to explanation. My students have no model to imitate. Teaching for me is among the most wonderfully energising activities there is. And when your role as a teacher passes from being a trainer, an instructor, to being an adviser, just a more experienced colleague, this is a most wonderful thing.

JS: And that wonderful thing will again be our principal focus in the September/October edition, where we'll centre on the teaching of children and the adult amateur. But for now, on *this* front, happy summer, happy practising, happy teaching!