

Learning and Teaching Healthy Piano Technique: Training as an Instructor in the Taubman Approach

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ABSTRACT

This research examines what can be learned about healthy virtuosity through embodying the Taubman Approach, applying the principles to compelling music making, and teaching across a range of pedagogical settings. The indivisible relationship of technical principles to artistry is discussed, through applying Taubman principles to particular interpretative and performance contexts. Additionally, various issues relating to teaching this technical approach are unpacked, including issues pertaining to retraining injured pianists, teaching children, and transferring Taubman principles to computer use and playing stringed instruments.

Insights into training to become a Taubman teacher are uncovered through a reflective examination of the author's learning process, contextualised by the broader literature, and positioned by the ethnographic and autoethnographic approaches chosen. David Kolb's Experiential Learning Model forms the theoretical framework, underlined by James Zull's research into the biology of learning. The four learning stages of embodying, analysing, teaching, and reflecting inform the research on all levels.

This dissertation makes several contributions to the literature and our understanding of healthy pianism. These include: examining the relationship of piano technique to what is termed "healthy virtuosity"; Dorothy Taubman's contributions to piano technique and principles of the Taubman Approach, and the musical contexts of learning, retraining in and teaching this technique. Currently, the Taubman Approach is little documented, despite success in assisting many musicians in overcoming technical limitations and playing-related musculoskeletal disorders (PRMDs), often developing greater pianistic and artistic skill than prior to injury. Furthermore, while quantitative studies traditionally dominate the literature, with the embodied, emotional musician largely absent, this dissertation offers a personal, insider perspective of the author's Taubman Instructor training through the Golandsky Institute in New York City, 2009.

Given the unacceptably high PRMD incidence among musicians including pianists, this dissertation illustrates the need for a deeper understanding of healthy pianism among students, performers and pedagogues. It is hoped this research will benefit a range of pianists, teachers, and health practitioners, and encourage wider investigation and dissemination of the Taubman Approach.

Keywords: Taubman Approach, Dorothy Taubman, piano technique, playing-related injury, PRMDS, healthy technique, David Kolb, James Zull, Golandsky Institute.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

The referencing and citing system used in this dissertation follows the procedures as per the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) Fifth Edition.

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