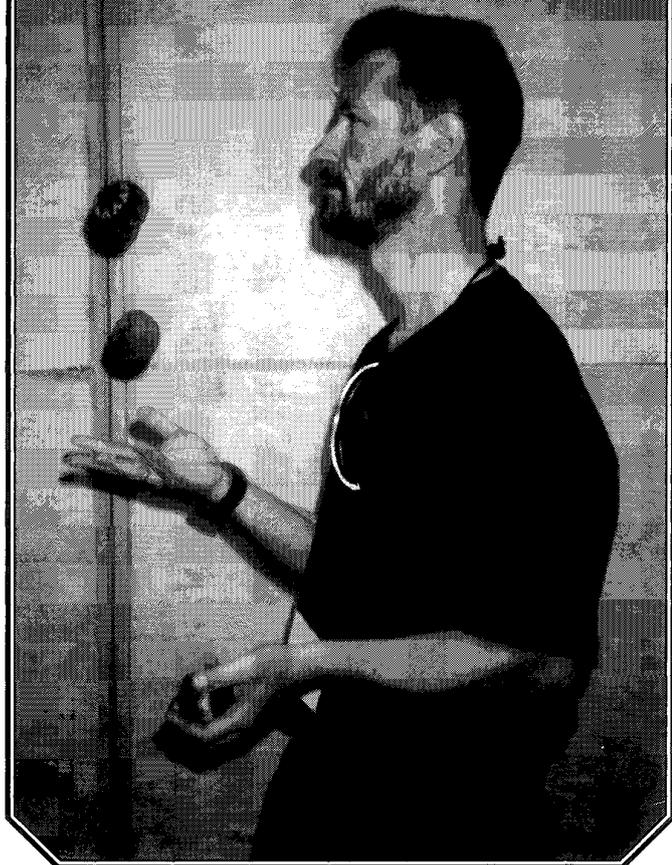


CHILD'S PLAY

Virginia Dixon, Editor



By Michael Klinghoffer

I have heard many people say that being a teacher is not something one can learn, that one either has it or does not. I think that might be true, if we think of learning in its narrow sense of simply acquiring information. I, for one, have forgotten much of what I learned in school, since what I learned there is not in everyday use. But there are things that we don't learn consciously, but rather absorb. When learning by osmosis one can never anticipate any specific outcome or when it might occur.

What Is a Master Teacher?

For example, we may listen to a recording without a particular purpose in mind. But later we may find that some new elements have filtered into our playing, although we may not consciously recognize where they came from. I have experienced this phenomenon myself. On many occasions I have come up with "new" ideas seemingly out of thin air, only to realize after a day or two, "Ah ha! That's what Gary Karr meant when he said..."

and as thoroughly as possible that he is no longer necessary to the pupil...In order to do this, I do not wish to reduce to a minimum myself as a person, as an individual; I merely wish to cease being a policeman, a trainer, and want to remain one of the many vital forces of the pupil, one of the impressions on his existence, one among many..." (p.172) Neuhaus wants his students to learn not just how to play the piano, but also to absorb analytical tools as well as musical insights. And of course, he wants them to learn his poetic approach. He states: "However far from a truly artistic performance a pupil may be, because of his weakness or inability, however bogged down he may be in the morass of overcoming elementary hand work, he must still be aware of and remember the "stratosphere" into which he must penetrate some time or other. Teachers who for years have been relentlessly working with very mediocre pupils frequently lose their faith in stars and stratosphere; they believe much more in etudes. A teacher of any instrument must first and foremost be a teacher of music." (p.173)

In one of our pedagogy classes at the Jerusalem Academy, my student Dimitri gave a presentation about Heinrich Neuhaus's book, *The Art of Piano Playing*, translated to English by K.A. Leibovitch and published by Barrie & Jenkins, London, 1973. Dimitri focused on the fifth chapter and the relationship between teacher and student.

In it, master piano teacher Heinrich Neuhaus (who taught Emil Gilels and Svatislav Richter) addresses many issues that every teacher has come across. "I consider that one of the main tasks of a teacher is to ensure as quickly

This is all very good at advanced levels, but what about teachers dealing with "Twinkle Twinkle?" How much can you do? I was very fortunate to assist the great master, the late David Einfeldt, who conducted, and taught Suzuki violin and viola at the

Hartt School Community Division. Like all true masters, Mr. Einfeldt was a very humble man. As a Suzuki father myself, I watched him teach my son his very first violin lessons. He was never upset with a child, and thanks to his endless creativity, he always had a solution for anything that came up. I owe Mr. Einfeldt much for what I know about working with young people. He understood that there is always something else one can do to inspire and challenge our students, even the youngest one.

Neuhaus posed the question of whether or not one can teach a student who is in some respects is more proficient than the teacher, and observed that "I could not play octaves as fast, as brilliantly and with such strength as he [Gilels] could...yet, I found enough justification to work with him." (p.183) Our attitude toward music should always be this fresh. "One cannot get used to the beauty of art, just as one cannot become used to, or be indifferent

to the beauty of a May morning, of a moon-less summer night with myriads of stars and, even more, to the spiritual beauty of man, which is the cause and the source of everything great in art."

Neuhaus has some special ideas about student-teacher relationships: "The teacher ceases to be a teacher in the narrow sense of the word, and becomes a senior colleague, endowed with greater experience and knowledge..." Neuhaus goes on to say that teaching not only turns into real education, but "this is a pure form of communication of bringing people together on the basis of their common devotion to art and the ability to create something in the field of art." (p.177) He sums up by saying: "...if I have given something to my pupils, they gave me no less, if not more...I am infinitely grateful to them for this, for our joint striving to know and master art was the foundation of our friendship, intimacy and mutual respect, and these sentiments are among the best that one

can experience on this planet." (p.203)

Having read this book and others written by master teachers, I have come to believe that the things that turn one into a real master are the very deep sources that nurture one's art. In order to grow tall and wide, a tree needs to have deeper and deeper roots. During my student days, the greater the difficulty of the pieces that I studied, the more Gary Karr insisted on exercises, scales and arpeggios. To me, this is the most important lesson. The more one grows outward, the more one needs to work inward. And in this respect, master teachers always remain students themselves.

(Michael Klinghoffer is a faculty member of the Jerusalem Academy for Music and dance, the Israel Music Academy and Tel Aviv University, and resident conductor of the Academy Symphony Orchestra.)

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