

some whiskey, and off it came. She finished up with a luxurious old-fashioned straight-razor shave, and I went out into the evening.

The salon is on 46th Street between Third and Lexington Avenues and I walked the crowded sidewalks down Lexington to 42nd Street, and into Grand Central Station to take the "6" train to our new apartment in Greenwich Village. I continually touched my cheeks and chin, getting used to new sensations. The feeling of cool air on my face was novel and strange. But by far the biggest sensation of change was that no one around me knew anything was different. It was rush hour and I must have walked past 60,000 people in those five minutes, and although I knew something was radically different, not one person noticed.

Wendy laughed out loud when I walked into our apartment. A few days later there was a family outing with my parents and two of my siblings—lots of ribaldry about who in the family I look like. And a couple days later I stopped shaving. I retreated to our place in Maine so, as Wendy teased, I could hide in the woods while it grew back.

I'm better now that the beard is back. Looking back on the experience, it's funny to think that what I actually look like doesn't fit my image of myself. Since I was a teenager I've known myself as a person with a beard, as has everyone around me. Without a beard I am myself, but I don't look like myself.

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We are a community of organists and organbuilders, professionals in a niche market. It's as though we're proprietors of a unique boutique. What is our image of ourselves? When we look into the proverbial mirror, whom and what do we see? Are we who we think we are?

How many of our customers like us because they think we're quaint? I'm reminded of these questions every time I'm at a social event and meeting people for the first time. In those situations it's inevitable that someone asks what I do and their response is swift and predictable: "Pipe organ builder? I didn't know there were any of you left." It's almost comical how often I hear that, exactly word for word.

During the second half of the twentieth century, much of our effort and talents were focused on the past. We studied and emulated the instruments that were played by the "old masters." We researched and emulated how the "old masters" played, and we programmed thousands of recitals that included nothing written within the last two or three-hundred years.

Make no mistake as you read this. I believe strongly that movement was essential to the future of the pipe organ. Without all that creative energy, without all that fresh understanding of the heritage of our instrument, there would not be the high level of excellence and competency in today's American organbuilding. And it's hard to imagine how we would be experiencing the music of Bach unfiltered by the careers of artists

like Gustav Leonhardt, Ton Koopman, or E. Power Biggs. That half-century was a modern Renaissance in the truest sense of the word.

Yesterday I heard a story on National Public Radio about actors who have researched the accents, pacing, and delivery of Shakespeare's plays as they were produced during his lifetime. A recording was played of Sir Lawrence Olivier delivering the famous "to be, or not to be" soliloquy from *Hamlet*, followed by one of the modern actors doing it according to this research. The research seemed to be saying the accent was close to that of modern Ireland (whatever that is) and the delivery was very quick. It was interesting enough, but I couldn't help wondering how in the world they think they know what a sixteenth-century actor sounded like?

I've lived in Boston most of my life, a city renowned for its famous accent, but as a Bostonian, I know there are at least five distinct "Boston" accents. How do we decide on an authentic accent for Stratford-on-Avon in 1595? And I'm not sure we can claim to know how fast a sixteenth-century Shakespearean actor spoke, any more than we can claim to know how fast Bach played the "little" *Fugue in G Minor*. The value of the research, both for Shakespearean accents and Bach's tempos, is whether it adds to the vitality of the performance.

Walk into the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York any day of the year, and you walk into a mob scene. The soon-to-be-replaced steps at the main entrance on Fifth Avenue have a carnival atmosphere, the big entrance lobby is jammed with tourists from dozens of different countries, and the galleries are all a-swirl with people gawking at the artworks. People used to go to organ recitals that way. There are plenty of historic accounts of huge enthusiastic crowds at concerts in municipal auditoriums and churches alike. Just a couple months ago in this column I reprinted the account of the dedication of the big Skinner organ in the 10,000-seat Municipal Auditorium in Cleveland, Ohio in 1922. The place was jammed, the aisles were full, thousands of people were turned away, and the police gave up trying to control the crowd. When was the last time you saw something like that at an organ recital?

I don't have the statistics at hand just now, but I remember reading that it was sometime in the 1960s that the cumulative attendance at live performances of classical music in the United States was surpassed for the first time by attendance at professional sporting events. I doubt that even the recently announced scandal-driven suspensions of coaches and players of the National Football League's New Orleans Saints will contribute to a reversal of that development.

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It's the twenty-first century now. We've survived the transition from one century to another. Remember how uptight everyone was about Y2K? Airplanes would crash, ATMs would run dry, clocks would stop, and heaven help anyone depending on a computer. January 1, 2000? No big

deal. And what were we going to call the first ten years of the century? The oh's, the aughts? Now we're about to enter the teens. No big deal.

In the 1920s, American pipe organ builders produced more than 2,000 organs a year. Companies like Skinner and Austin built a new organ each week—M.P. Möller had many years during which they shipped a new organ each day!

I'll go out on a limb and make an educated guess: American organbuilders have not produced 2,000 organs in the last thirty or even forty years combined. Since 1960, companies like Fisk, Noack, Dobson, and Andover have each built between one and two hundred organs. Taylor & Boody has just signed a contract for Opus 70. Möller built fewer and fewer new instruments each year until finally closing in 1992. Aeolian-Skinner closed in 1972. Year for year, the American market for new pipe organs is less than five percent of what it was a hundred years ago.

In fairness, these numbers need some interpreting. Today's organbuilders have a much higher percentage of projects rebuilding older organs than those of a century ago. Thousands of nineteenth-century masterpieces by builders such as Hook, Jardine, Hutchings, and Odell were replaced by the newfangled electro-pneumatic jobs built by Skinner, Austin, Kimball, and their competitors. Today we are much more likely to be renovating organs from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than building new instruments. And some of the markets for new organs a century ago are simply gone, such as the municipal organ, the big-money residence organ, and the cinema organ. Utterly outside the market for church organs, Wurlitzer and Aeolian built thousands of instruments for movie theaters and private homes. Last year's Oscar-winning movie, *The Artist*, about the quantum shift from silent movies to talkies, never gave a hint about the collapse of the market for theatre pipe organs!

But however you analyze the numbers, you can't escape the fact that the market is wildly different today. And we who love the organ are responsible for its place in our cultural heritage for the coming century.

So how do we see ourselves? Who is our audience? What is the future of the pipe organ in America? Are we condemned to cry in our beer as we lament the good old days like the enthusiasts of steam railroads?

What is our image of ourselves?

- Are we co-conspirators in a quixotic adventure?
- Are we hanging onto the glories of past ages?
- Is our range of expression limited to that of our predecessors?
- Are we playing to each other from positions of expertise, assuming that the general audience will be moved vicariously?

Answer those questions relative to the price of a new organ. We live in the age of the "million-dollar" organ. That's what it costs to commission a new instrument with three manuals and forty or fifty stops, and that's not a very large organ. That's a mighty large amount of money for a church to spend on a musical instrument in a society rife with poverty and other social needs. Are we presenting ourselves, and our music, to the public and to our congregations in a way that's worthy of expecting laypeople to justify coming up with that kind of money?

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That was a mighty negative list of questions. I offer them as challenges. I challenge you to think about your work, your interests, your plans for future repertoire and performances with those questions in mind. A great performer is a great communicator. When you perform, you share your convictions about your art with those who come to hear.

We refer to public performances of organ music as *recitals*. The dictionary says that a recital is a performance of music by a solo musician or a small musical ensemble. But if we embody the root of the word, *recite*, what are we offering to the listener? In that sense of the word, there's no implication of originality, or even passion. Don't recite, communicate.

I think that one of the attractions of viewing a work of visual art in a museum is that you are free to interpret it any way you want. You might be influenced by the way it's hung, the way it's lit, or the architecture of the gallery, but when you simply view the painting or statue you're on your own.

Music doesn't work that way. The only people who can appreciate a piece of music at that level are those who can read a score and understand the piece in silence. That experience is not available to the casual listener. When you listen to a piece of music you are influenced by the performer. It's therefore up to the performer to decide what kind of experience to provide for the consumer. It's up to the performer to give the listener a good experience.

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You might not think so from reading this so far, but I'm optimistic. In this world of instant communication, flashy digital equipment, and dwindling intellectual content in much of the public discourse, I think I see a refreshment of public appreciation for things that are real, that have depth of expression, and that feed people's cultural hunger. I've written often of my celebration of the ever-increasing numbers of genius young organists whose abilities are such that the technical demands of the most complex music simply dissolve, allowing the listener to hear the music un-bumped. There are dozens of players like that today, performers with old-world work ethics who are willing to devote themselves to routines of practice and diligence that we used to be able only to read about, shaking our heads. And the best news is that many of them are now the teachers of tomorrow's generation of masterful performers.

The Organ Historical Society was founded in 1956. In its nearly sixty-year history, the OHS has had a huge influence on how we view the heritage we've inherited from our predecessors. Over the same period of time we have studied and loved the music and instruments of various epochs of European history. We are much the richer for all of that. We have a strong community of outstanding organ-building firms. We have a rich crop of brilliant musicians who are finding new and exciting ways to use the pipe organ.

The past has informed us, but the future is a blank slate. Let's be sure we know who we are. ■

On Teaching by Gavin Black



Additional practice techniques

This month and next month I will discuss a number of practice techniques that involve changing something in the music while practicing. This includes practicing in rhythms other than the true rhythm of the passage being practiced, and practicing passages with some of the notes actually omitted. (The former is the subject this month, and the latter next month.) Some of the techniques are generally quite familiar, although I may have my own twist on them. I have at least briefly alluded to some of them elsewhere, but I think that it is useful to



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bring them together here and to zero in on them in a bit more detail.

Any and all of the techniques that I will describe here are meant only to supplement the basic, solid way of practicing that I try never to miss a chance to describe: slow, careful repetition—with or without separating hands and feet, depending on the exact circumstances—with correct notes and correct rhythms, speeding up only gradually, in a way that is determined by the flow of the practicing itself, rather than by any predetermined schedule. This discussion of, among other things, practicing “wrong” rhythms comes the month after I talked about various ways of thinking about counting and the art of learning correct rhythms. Therefore it is important to remember that practicing in alternate rhythms is a technique that should have a well-focused purpose and that should be kept conceptually separate from playing the piece or passage as such. I will talk some about how to maintain this separation.

Alternate rhythms: dotted values

For me, the purpose of practicing in alternate rhythms is quite specific: it is a halfway point between a slow practice tempo and a faster tempo, which may be the performance tempo or may be even faster than that. When a rhythm is altered, some notes become faster and some slower. The faster notes are being practiced in isolation at a faster tempo than they would have otherwise; the slower notes, because they are slower than they would otherwise be, provide an opportunity to rest and regroup between fast notes. The classic form of this sort of practice is, therefore, to create pairs of practice rhythms, in each of which half the notes are fast and the other half slow, and between which all of the notes get a chance to be the ones that are being played (extra) fast.

In turn, the classic form of that technique is to take a passage in which the note values are uniform and to make those note values dotted. So a passage that looks like that in Example 1 will be played first like Example 2, and then like Example 3.

The purpose of this, again, is technical. The first rhythm offers a chance to practice half of the movements from one note to the next quickly; the second offers the chance to practice the other half equally quickly. Because this kind of practice allows the player to stop and rest, in effect, after each fast gesture, it is usually possible to include and drill those fast gestures sooner in the process of learning the piece than it would be possible to boost the overall tempo to that same speed.

A modification of this technique that I think makes it even more useful is to replace the dotted rhythms (“regular” and “reverse”) with a kind of unmeasured over-dotting. So, in the above rhythmic templates, the dotted eighth-notes would all be replaced with fermata-ed notes to be held as long as you want, and the sixteenth-notes would be replaced with notes as short, quick, and light as you can make them. This approach creates an even more intense drilling of the quick gestures and an even more effective rest between those gestures. It also, by virtue of its being farther from any sort of regular pulse, has less ability to affect or possibly undermine the regular steady rhythm of the passage when the player returns to regular rhythm.

This sort of practicing can be applied very naturally to a line such as the opening of Bach’s *Prelude & Fugue in G Major*, BWV 541 (Example 4), which is in one voice only and in all or almost all one note-value. Practicing a line such as this in some version of dotted rhythm is most useful if you analyze what it is that you are gaining in each spot in the line. For example, when it is the on-the-beat sixteenth-notes that are held long, then going from the first beat to the second beat of the second measure (marked x) you will be practicing quickly moving the hand position in such a way as to reach the middle D reliably.

In a passage such as Example 5—from the Vierne *Divertissement (Pièces en Style Libre)*—if a dotted rhythm is ap-

plied to the sixteenth-note line, the quarter-note chords will come along for the ride, and the practicing of those chords will also be affected. If the on-the-beat sixteenth-notes are being held long, then in spots like those marked with x’s the student must be fully ready to play the next chord, as well as the next sixteenth-note, before playing the (very fast) off-the-beat sixteenth-note. The actual gesture of moving from one chord to

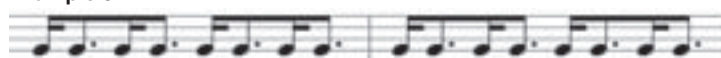
Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



Example 4



Example 5



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another will then be fast: probably faster than it will need to be in the piece. However, the student will have time, waiting on the “and of two,” to prepare that very fast gesture. The other half of the exercise—the reverse dotting—applied to this passage probably has less effect on the feel of the playing of the chords. In that case, moments like those marked with y’s will probably constitute the most intense and useful part of the exercise—playing wide intervals very quickly.

In writing like Example 6—from the Bach *Tocatta & Fugue in F Major*—these sorts of rhythms can be applied to one hand at a time and then to both hands together. Again, the student should analyze and pay attention to what exactly is being practiced at each moment in the passage. For example, going from the second beat to the third beat of the first measure of this excerpt, the left hand has a “stretch” or shift in hand position while the right hand does not; the opposite is true near the end of the fourth measure, or heading into the last measure. The use of the two complementary dotting patterns will highlight some of these technical details.

(Would it be a good idea to practice this passage or one like it using *opposite* dotting in the two hands? That is, first place the lengthened notes on the beats in the right hand and off the beats in the left hand, then reverse both of these. I have actually never tried that and I can’t recall a student’s doing it. The purely physical practice would be unchanged from the method described above, but the concentration required would be different—and it would probably be harder.)

Alternate rhythms: Groupings of notes

Another format for altering rhythms to create effective targeted practice strategies involves speeding up not one note at a time (every other note, as above) but clusters of notes. The classic way of organizing this is to play first all of the notes after each beat very fast, ending on and then holding the next beat, then to play all of the notes starting on each beat very fast, ending with the last off-the-beat note of each grouping. The template for doing this works as follows. For a set of notes written like Example 7, you would first play as shown in Example 8, with the notes under each slur played as fast as possible, and the notes under the fermatas held as long as necessary to feel ready to play the next cluster of fast notes; then Example 9.

In this case, the notes under the slurs should again be played as fast as possible. Then the last note of each grouping can be held until it feels comfortable to execute the next cluster of fast notes, or the note can be released, and the waiting can take place while not actually holding any notes: in effect a fermata in the gap between groups of notes. In the latter case, of course, it is a good idea not to let the hands or feet move too far above or away from the keys.

(As it happens, I myself have recently used the fast-cluster approach myself on this Buxtehude harpsichord passage,

Example 6



Example 10



from the *La Capricciosa Variations*, which I have always found extremely hard—harder than I had originally expected [Example 10]. This measure is full of funny changes of direction and unexpected intervals. I was eventually able to get comfortable with it—and to get it to be reliable—and I believe that the fast-cluster practicing was the most important part of the process.)

How to use alternate rhythms

Practicing in “off” rhythms is, as I said above, a technical practice. The purpose is not to learn something about rhythm or any other artistic or interpretive aspect of the piece. It is to drill isolated gestures at a fast tempo in a focused way that does not demand that the fast tempo be kept up for very long. Therefore, it only makes sense to practice a passage this way (that is, in one of these ways) once the fingering and/or pedaling has been worked out and is indeed fairly well learned. If the fingering or pedaling is uncertain, then the fast moments in the rhythmic patterns are not going to work: they will be hesitant or actually fall apart. It also makes sense to practice this way only with a complete texture or with a part of the texture that involves the same fingering and pedaling as the complete texture. That is, it is fine—very useful in fact—to apply different rhythms to one hand at a time or to the feet alone, but not to separate voices extracted from a contrapuntal piece.

Since the technical purpose of this sort of practice is focused on the fast moments, the slow moments, whether they amount to every other note or to one note in a larger grouping, can be held for as long as the player wants. There does not need to be an overall tempo. Since every gesture—moving from one note to the next—takes its turn at being the fast gesture, everything gets practiced effectively regardless of how long—how slow—the held notes are. The less regular the timing of the held notes—the more the student simply waits on those notes until he or she feels ready to play the next fast gesture—the less this kind of practice will have any tendency to interfere with normal rhythm, because it

Example 7



Example 8



Example 9



Example 11



will not be presenting an effective alternate rhythm.

It is easiest to apply this kind of practicing to passages in which rhythm is more or less even, as in all of the examples so far. In a passage such as Example 11, from Buxtehude’s *Praeludium in C Major*, BuxWV 136, the rhythm is less regular. There are beats in which the surface rhythm is two eighth-notes, in which it is four sixteenth-notes, and in which it is mixed. In the second beat of each of the first two measures of this excerpt, for example, if all of the notes within that beat are being played fast, then it would be conceivable either to try to maintain the rhythmic relationships within the beat, or just to play all of the notes as fast as possible and, therefore, as fast as one another, whether they are in fact eighth-notes or sixteenthths. Either approach could be fine, as far as I can tell, and they would both amount to effective practicing. In fact, students can be encouraged to create their own short clusters of notes for very fast practicing, and to figure out how they would like to deal with rhythms within those clusters. As long as the clusters are not very long, and as long as they overlap by a note or two, the practicing should work well.

Next month I will talk about a sort of practicing that is, in a sense, the opposite of what I have been discussing here, namely playing some notes of a passage while leaving the other notes out. The reasons for doing this are usually not technical, but rather about developing

the ears’ relationship to the music in a way that enhances understanding of structure, rhythm, and pulse. ■

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Hear us, Eternal One, and we shall be healed;
Save us and we shall be saved.
For it is to You that we offer praise.
Grant complete healing for all of our afflictions.
For You, God, are a faithful and compassionate Healer.

Torah: From the weekday Amidah

In 1965, Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Sandy Koufax decided not to pitch in the first game of the World Series because it coincided with Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish year. Such religious respect is greatly to be admired, especially since it was well known that Koufax personally was not very religious. Yet, those thousands of years of tradition were maintained and, perhaps, justified because he threw a three-hit shutout on two days’ rest and won the decisive seventh game of the series. Since Hasidic tradition holds that one of man’s purposes is to assist God in the work of redemption by “hallowing” the things in creation, it is easy to celebrate Koufax’s commitment.

Historians tell us that in the twelfth century, the famous Rabbi Judah Halevy mourned the loss of decent music. According to him, music declined because it became the work of inferior people. It degenerated from its former greatness because people, too, had degenerated. Clearly this is not true today, with giants such as Leonard Bernstein,



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