

Emily Wallace
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MUS 664 Smith
Performance Practice Presentations

“The Romantic Tradition and Lineage, Genealogy, Inheritance...”

The Phenomenon: Pianists in the continuing Romantic tradition take special pride in their lineages of teachers, especially if they lead back to Beethoven. There is often an unspoken assumption that technique, artfulness, or other “sacred” knowledge can be handed down from teacher to student.

Thesis: Various musicologists have criticized this idea as mere myth. Using sources and personal experience I will argue that this is not the entire story. Evidence shows clear tangible items acting as a vehicle for the transmission of intangible information.

Tangible Items Which are Handed Down in Studio:

- Books which are recommended or required reading
 - EX: *Conversations with Arrau* – Joseph Horowitz (interview with Arrau on teachings)
 - EX: *The Piano Master Classes of Franz Liszt, 1884-1886 : Diary Notes of August Göllerich*
- Editions which are used or elevated above others
 - EX: *the Complete Beethoven Piano Sonatas*, ed. By Claudio Arrau and Lothar Hoffman-Erbrecht. Edition Peters No. 8100, 1973. (Claudio’s fingerings are preserved)
- Specific recordings/performances
 - EX: Arrau’s late Beethoven performances

Intangible Information transmitted w/ instruction and tangible materials:

(more diff. to prove but are suggested and preserved with tangible materials)

- Technique
- Interpretation
- Repertoire preferences
- Pedagogical practices

Claudio Arrau’s Technique and Teaching (Case study of specific Fingerings on opposite side)

- Natural arm weight and free arm drop, freedom of wrist to help fingers – creating a massive, full, round, orchestral tone without “attacking” or “harshness”
- Favor of natural round relaxed hand shape – removal of all unnecessary tension for emotional/spiritual freedom in performance
- “True” legato and legato fingering

Class questions:

1. What are some characteristics of Claudio Arrau’s technique?
2. What tangible sources suggest the preservation of Claudio Arrau’s technique?
3. What are some examples of intangible information which *may* be transmitted from teacher to student?

Cast Study: Beethoven op 13 no 8 “Pathétique” Sonata

ARRAU/Edition Peters(1973):

The image displays two musical staves for the first movement of Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata, Op. 13 No. 8. Both staves are marked 'Grave' and 'fp'. The top staff is labeled '8.' and the bottom staff is also labeled '8.'. The music is in C minor, 3/4 time. The top staff features a melodic line with fingerings: 5, 3, 4, 5, 5, 4, 2, 5, 3, 5, 5, 5. The bottom staff features a bass line with fingerings: 2, 3, 5, 2, 2, 1, 3. Red boxes highlight specific fingering changes in both staves at the beginning of measure 2.

Louis Köhler (1820–1886) Adolf Ruthardt (1849–1934) 1910
Peters - courtesy of IMSLP

This example immediately shows in mm. 2 Arrau favoring a closed/natural hand position, and sacrifice of convenience for true legato sound. There is also suggestion of a free arm drop in the beginning of mm 2 to achieve the *fp*.