

A METHOD OF INDIVIDUALISM: THE ORIGINS,
STANDARDS, AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF
FANNIE BLOOMFIELD ZEISLER'S TEACHING

by

CINDY ST. CLAIR

KEVIN THOMAS CHANCE, COMMITTEE CHAIR

LINDA PAGE CUMMINS
TANYA L. GILLE
JENNIFER L. MANN
TRICIA A. MCELROY
THOMAS S. ROBINSON

A DOCUMENT

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts
in the Department of Music
in the Graduate School of
The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2016

Copyright Cindy St. Clair 2016
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler's life is remarkable as few American women established themselves during the late 1800s and early 1900s as world-renowned concert pianists or artist-teachers. She was extraordinarily successful as both. As the first American student of the famous European pedagogue Theodore Leschetizky, Zeisler was the fundamental transmitter of his ideas to the United States. Like Leschetizky's students, her students had to undergo rigorous technical training for months to develop strong fingers and relaxed wrists. Once the training was complete, students worked on repertoire during which Zeisler meticulously studied their unique abilities and worked to develop the highest level of musicality, discipline, self-reliance, individuality, and integrity. Additionally, Zeisler taught her students the importance of intellectual study and effective practice habits. Modeled after Leschetizky, Zeisler taught exclusively in a group class setting. She wrote much about her teaching ideas, which were equivalent to her master teacher's, and she worked to promote the highest level of music study in the United States.

Due to Zeisler's exceptional talent, magnetic personality, and relentless devotion to music, she became a cultural ambassador for women in music. Although initially compared to male performers, her level of performance broke through early barriers separating men and women. This was an important step in helping American women virtuosos to become recognized as unique individuals worthy of the concert stage. Additionally, Zeisler became an advocate for women composers in the American public, writing about and performing their works on her concerts.

DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to the memory of my parents, William David Myers, Sr. and Janice Harris Myers. They loved and supported me unconditionally throughout their lives; encouraged me always to work beyond my perceived capabilities with passion and perseverance; and instilled in me the love of music. They are constantly on my mind and forever in my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my major professor, committee chair, and mentor, Kevin Thomas Chance, for his teaching, support, inspiring musicianship, and friendship over the last five years. I would also like to thank the other members of my doctoral committee, Linda Page Cummins, Tanya L. Gille, Jennifer L. Mann, Tricia A. McElroy, and Thomas S. Robinson, for their encouragement and guidance in the completion of this document and their support for my future. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Jay St. Clair, and my daughter, Lauren Sanders, for their unending and unconditional love and support as I have pursued my passion for music and for teaching. Without them, none of this would have been possible.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| ABSTRACT | ii |
| DEDICATION | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | iv |
| LIST OF FIGURES | vii |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1. THE LIFE OF FANNIE BLOOMFIELD ZEISLER | 4 |
| a. American Women in Music in the 1800s and 1900s | 4 |
| b. A Biographical Sketch of Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler..... | 6 |
| 2. PIANO STUDY IN THE 1800S AND 1900S..... | 14 |
| a. The Evolution of Piano Study in the United States..... | 14 |
| b. The Development of Group Lessons | 17 |
| c. Advances in the Mechanics of Piano Playing | 18 |
| 3. ZEISLER'S PHILOSOPHY AND TEACHING STYLE..... | 22 |
| a. Zeisler's Artist Class | 22 |
| b. The Importance of Technical Development | 27 |
| c. Ideas on Practice and Performance | 33 |
| d. Repertoire Choices..... | 39 |
| e. Development of Well-Rounded Individuals | 41 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 4. TRANSFERENCE OF THE LESCHETIZKY STANDARDS TO THE UNITED STATES | 45 |
| a. Zeisler's Master Teacher..... | 45 |
| b. How Leschetizky Taught | 47 |
| c. Continuation of Leschetizky's Legacy..... | 58 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 61 |
| REFERENCES | 68 |
| APPENDIX A: PHOTOGRAPHS OF ZEISLER'S ARTIST CLASS | 73 |
| APPENDIX B: SKETCHES FROM THE ARTIST CLASS | 75 |
| APPENDIX C: ZEISLER'S MAXIMS | 77 |
| APPENDIX D: ZEISLER'S FINGER EXERCISES | 82 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 1 Thumb Crossing Exercises | 30 |
|----------------------------------|----|

INTRODUCTION

Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler (1863-1927), American concert pianist and pedagogue, rose to prominence in the late 1800s following rigorous training with the renowned European teacher Theodor Leschetizky and several highly acclaimed European tours. She remained a leading concert artist until the 1920s, averaging fifty concerts per season in extensive tours of Europe and the United States. Harold Schonberg described Zeisler as a “powerful technician with a staggering repertoire.”¹ She was frequently and favorably compared to Liszt, Paderewski, and Anton Rubinstein. As a prominent female artist in a male-dominated field, Zeisler became a cultural ambassador for women, especially women musicians. Perhaps she received the ultimate review when Philip Hale of the *Boston Journal* wrote, “Mrs. Zeisler played like a man; not like a little man, but like a robust and bearded creature rejoicing in his strength. Her technique was above reproach.”²

Astonishingly, for approximately thirty years Zeisler balanced her extensive concert career with family responsibilities of a husband and three children; participation in professional associations, musical societies, and community projects in the Chicago area; and teaching. After 1912, she reduced her concert schedule significantly and devoted more time to teaching.

This document is the first major study of Zeisler’s teaching ideas and preferences. The majority of the document, Chapters 3 and 4, undertakes a thorough explanation and comparative analysis of the teaching methods of Zeisler and her master teacher, Theodore Leschetizky. Intriguingly, Leschetizky and Zeisler claimed they taught to the individuality of each student

¹ Schoenberg, “The Ladies,” 353.

² Hale, “Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler.”

without any fixed method. Biographical accounts, interviews, and articles, however, reveal much about their teaching ideas and preferences. Comparisons and contrasts illustrate how one of the most influential teachers of the nineteenth century informed Zeisler's personal teaching and mentoring.

Additionally, this study documents the importance of Zeisler's influence in the United States, showing how both her work with Leschetizky and her experiences and familiarity with the European music scene informed her life and teaching here. Zeisler cared deeply about her students, about the art, and about advancing musical standards in the United States. Her life was remarkable and worthy of recognition.

It is surprising that so little has been studied and written about Zeisler's life and career and that what has been written neglects her role as a pedagogue. In June 2015, the University of Illinois Press released *Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler: The Life and Times of a Piano Virtuoso* written by Beth Abelson Macleod, Arts and Music Librarian at Central Michigan University. This book represents a colorful and vivid account of Zeisler's life from a social and cultural viewpoint. Much of the book concentrates on Zeisler's personal life and concert career; approximately three pages mention her teaching. Prior to this publication, Dr. Diana R. Hallman, a musicologist at the University of Kentucky, wrote the first comprehensive study of Zeisler's career, a master's thesis submitted in 1983. As in Macleod's work, Hallman's paper outlines Zeisler's concert career and describes the phenomena propelling Zeisler into the public realm. Hallman is currently working on a book reconstructing Zeisler's performance history and repertoire, which she hopes to have published in the next few years. Even though neither writer has concentrated on Zeisler's teaching career, both agree that Zeisler, the first American student

of Leschetizky, was an essential transmitter of Leschetizky's teaching methods and standards to the United States.

Much of the research for this document was conducted in two different locations, the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois, and the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio. These archives contain numerous boxes of original notes, papers, correspondence, articles, concert reviews, and miscellaneous materials relating to Zeisler's life. Two documents of particular importance to this study survive: a handwritten biography of Zeisler penned by her husband, never published, and a printed publication titled "Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler: An Appreciation," a compilation of reflections by her students presented to her at the fiftieth anniversary of her first public performance. This compilation provides information and insight relating to Zeisler's students, private studio, teaching style, and methods. Other sources include published articles written during the 1900s about Zeisler's teaching and her thoughts on music education, some written by Zeisler in an effort to raise the standards of music education in the United States.

CHAPTER 1

THE LIFE OF FANNIE BLOOMFIELD ZEISLER

American Women and Music in the 1800s and 1900s

Before the twentieth century, American women were not allowed to vote, serve on juries, or hold public office, and they were subject to wide-ranging discrimination that marked them as secondary citizens. There were different social expectations for men and women in society. Men worked in the public; women worked in private in domestic roles. Over the course of the 1900s, however, the role of women in America progressed into all aspects of public life, including politics and various professions.

In the 1800s, amateur music-making was a social activity. Only wealthy families could afford musical instruction and buy instruments.³ Keyboard instruments, the guitar, and the harp were initially the only instruments considered acceptable for females, because they were delicate instruments capable of presenting the melody in a high range like a soprano's voice. These instruments could also provide melody as well as accompaniment allowing women to pursue the playing of them as a solitary activity. Further, women could sit with a graceful posture while playing these instruments thereby maintaining their appropriate feminine mannerisms.⁴

As cities grew and developed in the nineteenth century, the middle class grew. Lessons in music, dancing, embroidery, and art, among other things, became expected for well bred

³ Block, "Women in American Music," 147.

⁴ Macleod, "Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?," 291-293.

girls.⁵ Musical opportunities for women grew rapidly. Between 1870 and 1900 the percentage of women employed in a music profession, mainly teaching, rose from thirty-six percent to fifty-six percent. By 1900, women were professional violinists, and there were all-women orchestras. Some orchestras premiered concertos and a symphony by American women composers.⁶

The piano became the first instrument for a woman solo artist. Initially, only a small number of American women established themselves as concert artists due to many challenges. American audiences generally did not accept concert artists who had not studied and performed in Europe. Therefore, families with child prodigies sacrificed much, particularly financially, to send their young teenage girls to Europe for study. It was difficult for these girls to be separated from their families for up to five years and to overcome language and cultural barriers. It was also difficult for the girls to return to the United States, as each had to immediately find a reputable agent and diligently work to become a recognized concert artist.⁷ Engagements were challenging to find as Americans had few opportunities to attend concerts of this nature. Recital circuits and sponsorship had not been established. These young girls spent all their time practicing while their mothers searched for opportunities for them.⁸ Further, after women made it to the concert stage, they were consistently compared to men in their performances. Men were thought to have more natural ability, strength, and tone at the piano, making them superior artists.⁹ Thankfully, several women concert artists helped to diminish this discrimination in America.

⁵ Block, "Women in American Music," 147-148.

⁶ Tick, "Passed Away is the Piano Girl," 326.

⁷ Macleod, *Women Performing Music*, 3-4.

⁸ Ibid., 48-49.

⁹ Macleod, "Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?," 291-293.

One of the first women to debut as a child prodigy in the United States was Sophia Hewitt, who performed in New York in 1807 around the age of seven.¹⁰ Later she taught piano, harp, organ, and voice and served at two churches in Boston. In 1820, she was appointed organist of the Handel and Haydn Society, a post she held for ten years.¹¹ Public performances by other women were rare until around 1862 when another child prodigy, an eight-year-old Venezuelan girl, gave her public debut in New York. This prodigy, Teresa Carreño, had a remarkably successful career concertizing all over the world.¹² Julie Rivé-King (1857-1937) and Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler were the next two American child prodigies who reached the stature of Carreño. Cincinnati born Rivé-King studied some with Liszt in Europe. She performed over four thousand times as a solo artist and in appearances with orchestras.¹³ She was called “the most brilliant American female pianist of the period 1885-1900.”¹⁴ Unlike that of Carreño, though, Rivé-King’s career was mainly confined to the United States.¹⁵ Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler succeeded Rivé-King as the greatest American woman pianist. Her fame was recognized in Europe and the United States into at least the 1970s, fifty years after her death.¹⁶

A Biographical Sketch of Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler

Zeisler was born Fanny Blumenfeld¹⁷ on July 16, 1863, in Bielitz, Austria, a thriving city about 250 miles north of Vienna in the Carpathian mountains. This area was known for its

¹⁰ Ammer, *Unsung*, 43.

¹¹ Block, “Women in American Music,” 153.

¹² Ammer, *Unsung*, 44-49.

¹³ Schoenberg, “The Ladies,” 265.

¹⁴ Ammer, *Unsung*, 55.

¹⁵ Ibid., 51-59.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Until age 12, Zeisler was known as Fanny Blumenfeld. After living in the United States for several years, she changed the spelling of her first name to Fannie. Around age 20, when Zeisler was embarking on a recognized concert career and at the urging of her brother Moriz, who had changed his name to Maurice Bloomfield, Zeisler changed the spelling of her last name to be consistent with her brother’s.

textile industry, outstanding schools and parks, and exceptional cultural experiences.¹⁸ Zeisler's family was one of the most refined Jewish families in the area, and she absorbed both Jewish and German values and traditions from them. Neither of Zeisler's parents received a formal education, but both were well read and knowledgeable. Her father, Salomon Blumenfeld, made a modest living as a merchant. He was a dreamer with a passion for studying Hebrew language and literature. He also enjoyed reading German and English classical poetry and fiction. He was overtly meticulous with all aspects of his business and personal life. Zeisler's mother, Bertha Jaeger, was also scholarly, as well as resourceful, intelligent, clever, and free-spirited. Bertha was an insatiable reader and could quote extensively from the works of Schiller, Heine, and Goethe. Although she was raised under strict beliefs of orthodox Jewish religion and tradition, she had a small rebellious streak relating to secular literature and music and social conventions.

Salomon and Bertha had Sigmund, Moriz, and a third son who died as an infant. Zeisler, their last child, was born when Sigmund was nine and Moriz was eight. Zeisler was fragile, anemic, nervous, serious, and restless as a child. She struggled with these and other health issues throughout her life.

Zeisler spent a lot of time with her paternal grandmother, who came to live with the family after the death of her husband. By the time she was four, Zeisler knew her alphabet and had started learning to read, due mainly to efforts from her grandmother. Zeisler loved sad stories, and she often begged her mother to sing sad bedtime songs to her.

Due to hardship after the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, the family decided to immigrate to the United States following the path of other family members. The family's financial

¹⁸ Unless otherwise noted, details in this sketch of Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler's life comes from Sigmund Zeisler's handwritten, undated, and un-paginated biography housed in the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois under the *Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler and Sigmund Zeisler Papers*. It can also be found in the *Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Papers* in the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio.

situation, which had been extremely challenging in Austria, improved within a very short period of time. The children quickly learned English, made friends with neighborhood children, and thrived in school. Some of Zeisler's seriousness disappeared, and her health improved. Although the family originally moved to Wisconsin, by 1870, they had settled into a Jewish neighborhood in booming Chicago.

Zeisler's musical talent appeared when she was very young, probably around the age of six. After watching Moriz practice, she became fascinated with the piano; it was her favorite activity. Once Moriz realized Zeisler could play pieces correctly just from hearing them, he decided to teach her from one of his piano method books. Zeisler surpassed her brother, however, by learning more difficult pieces in the book on her own. Moriz, therefore, persuaded their parents to have her study with his teacher, Bernhard Ziehn. She was small and seemingly underdeveloped, so Ziehn limited her practice to one hour per day. Eventually, she was able to practice two hours, which made her happy. During the three years that she studied with Ziehn, she not only developed technically, but she also learned theory and harmony. She studied and played Czerny etudes, as well as, sonatas by Clementi, Haydn, and Mozart. On her own, she learned contemporary music.

Per the recommendation of Ziehn, ten-year-old Zeisler began studying with a new teacher in town, Carl Wolfson, who had the reputation of being a fine pianist and pedagogue from twenty years of work in Philadelphia. Zeisler was his youngest and perhaps most talented student, and she quickly advanced. Before she was 13, she had played major repertoire, including Beethoven sonatas and concertos; much of Schumann's works, including the Symphonic Etudes; and the two Chopin concertos.¹⁹ Chicago was an ideal place for Zeisler to showcase her talent. Shortly after moving to Chicago, Wolfsohn established the Beethoven

¹⁹ Matthews, "A Great Pianist at Home," 2.

Society, a music club where members came to study and hear great music.²⁰ Zeisler became a frequent soloist for the Society, giving her debut performance at the society's fifth reunion in February 1875. She received reviews predicting a promising future. At the time, she was eleven.

In 1878, when Zeisler was about fourteen, she received the opportunity to play for Russian virtuoso pianist Annette Essipoff who was on tour in the United States. Essipoff studied with Leschetizky, eventually marrying him. In Europe, many critics placed Essipoff second to Liszt and above Anton Rubinstein and Clara Schumann.²¹ When she came to the United States in the late 1800s, she and Leschetizky were unknown figures. After her first concert in Boston, however, both names became known in American musical societies. Some believe Essipoff laid the foundation for Leschetizky's reputation in the United States.²²

Impressed with Zeisler's talent, Essipoff convinced Zeisler's parents to send her to Leschetizky for study. Zeisler left for Vienna in 1878. At the time, Leschetizky was supposed to be moving to Vienna from St. Petersburg, Russia, but his move was delayed until the following summer. As a result, Zeisler enrolled in the Vienna Conservatory until his arrival.

Acceptance for study with Leschetizky was difficult, because he only wanted unusually gifted and advanced students intending to become professional pianists. While questioning Zeisler's stamina to endure the rigorous training, upon her instance he ultimately decided to accept her as a student. For months, Zeisler was not allowed to work on repertoire but rather had to work on exercises to develop independence of the fingers and muscle strength with perfectly relaxed wrists. During the five years that Zeisler studied with Leschetizky, Zeisler attended class lessons. She only had a private lesson with Leschetizky during times when he was not strong

²⁰ Ibid., 2-3.

²¹ Lahee, *Famous Pianists*, 300-301.

²² Tracey, "Some of the World's Greatest Women Pianists," 774.

enough to teach all the students and made an exception for her.²³ Zeisler was one of Leschetizky's favorite students. He called her his "electric wonder."²⁴ Zeisler believed he was the greatest influence on her artistry. Before leaving Vienna, Zeisler played several times in that city earning high praise from critics. In the fall of 1883, she returned to the United States to begin her American tour.

On October 18, 1885, she married her second cousin Sigmund Zeisler whom she met during her Vienna years.²⁵ Sigmund received a law degree from the University of Vienna then followed Zeisler to Chicago. He became a well-known attorney in the United States, famous for his involvement in the Chicago anarchist cases of 1886. She and Sigmund had three sons named Leonard (born in 1886), Paul (born in 1897), and Ernest (born in 1899).

Zeisler returned to Vienna in 1888 for a five-month refresher course with Leschetizky. She received private lessons and attended his classes. She greatly benefited from Leschetizky's work with his students, which included Paderewski. Essipoff also played in class. During this visit, Zeisler spent much time at the Leschetizky home, along with Paderewski and Eduard Schuett, a composer and another former student. Zeisler also spent a great deal of time with Essipoff, which allowed her to meet and perform for some of the greatest musicians and cultural leaders of the day. Zeisler's visit to Vienna was invaluable. Whenever she traveled close to Vienna, she visited with Leschetizky. He was extremely fond of Zeisler and appreciated her devotion and loyalty to him. Leschetizky gave Zeisler a locket containing his hair, along with some of Liszt's and Anton Rubinstein's. She cherished this locket more than any other gift

²³ Zeisler, "Mme. Bloomfield's Opinions," 9.

²⁴ *Musical America*, "Passing of the World's Most Famous Piano Teacher," 4.

²⁵ After marrying Sigmund, she changed her professional name to Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler. Some studies and articles relating to Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler hyphenate her last name as "Bloomfield-Zeisler." Her husband's handwritten biography and a few other primary sources, some of which include her signature, show her name without the hyphen.

received. Significantly, Zeisler was instrumental in helping with the planning of a memorial tribute to Leschetizky in Vienna on September 26, 1926, where she unveiled a monument of him.

Through the spring of 1893, Zeisler repeatedly appeared on the concert stage in the United States, often as the soloist of prominent orchestral organizations, such as the New York Philharmonic and the symphony orchestras of Boston, Chicago, Buffalo, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. She received lustrous reviews in all places and at one point had been declared the greatest American woman pianist. Her desire, however, was to be one of the greatest living pianists in the world. She returned to Europe in the fall of 1893 and toured in major cities through 1895, including Berlin, Vienna, Dresden, Frankfort, Munich, Hanover, Copenhagen, Geneva, and many others. She was recognized in all of those places as one of the greatest pianists of all time.

In the spring of 1895, Zeisler returned to the United States playing recitals and appearing with major orchestras every season in the most important American cities. William Armstrong documented one such performance in the February 2, 1896, edition of *The Chicago Tribune*:

Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler, the most brilliant of American pianists, made her reappearance after an absence of a few years. Since she played here last she has enjoyed triumphs in Germany and Austria, and that they were well deserved, her magnificent performances demonstrated beyond question. She returns to us a finished artist, her technical equipment on a par with contemporary masters of the instrument, and her old fire and fury as fascinating as ever. She played, a terrible test for man, woman or beast, the Schumann concerto [and] the Rubinstein in D minor. To cap this, she responded after about half a dozen recalls by giving the Liszt-Schubert Erlking with poetry and passion... In velocity, clarity in passage work, limpidity in purely spiccato this slender girl has but one superior in the land – Rafael Joseffy. Temperamentally she has no rivals....²⁶

In 1898, Zeisler went to England where she, as expected, captivated her audiences. While there, she was invited to be the piano soloist at the annual Lower Rhine Music Festival, held in Cologne May 29 through May 31, 1898. Performing before one of the most critical audiences in

²⁶ Sigmund Zeisler, “Biography,” un-paginated.

the world, in the presence of the most celebrated musicians and critics of all Europe, she finally reached her goal of being declared one of the world's greatest virtuosos.

Zeisler performed extensively until around 1912. By 1907, critics were commenting that no pianist had ever played before so many people or in so many American cities as Zeisler. Her name had become a household word. Zeisler also performed at the White House and became good friends with President Taft's wife. Unusual for a sitting President, Taft wrote letters introducing Zeisler to American ambassadors in Europe. In these letters, he called Zeisler America's greatest pianist. In an article for *The Etude*, concert pianist Eugenio Pirani called Zeisler not only one of the foremost pianists of the time, but a "highly intelligent and broadly informed woman with whom one can discuss other things besides music."²⁷ Her husband's biography informs the reader that Zeisler was a wonderful wife and mother. Even with an extensive career, she did not neglect her family.

During extended breaks between travel and concertizing, Zeisler devoted time to teaching. From the beginning of her career, she received numerous requests from students for study without any recruiting effort on her part and with excessive tuition fees. When she was home, she would devote one afternoon a week for teaching as she felt it a duty to educate the next generation of musicians. Once she decided to reduce her performances, Zeisler focused more on teaching. Due to her fame as a concert pianist, she naturally became one of the most sought after teachers in the United States.

According to one source, Zeisler joined the faculty at Chicago's School of Lyric and Dramatic Art in 1884, and in 1903, she became the head of the piano department of Bush Temple Conservatory of Music, which later became Chicago Conservatory College.²⁸ A letter

²⁷ Pirani, "From Liszt to Leschetizky," 728.

²⁸ Burns, "Unsung Heroines," 26.

from Amy Fay to her brother dated December 23, 1908, mentions that Rivé-King replaced Zeisler as a teacher at Bush Temple.²⁹ Curiously, her husband does not mention these teaching posts in his biography of her. The scope of this particular study focuses on Fannie's teaching in her home studio.

²⁹ McCarthy, *More Letters of Amy Fay*, 81.

CHAPTER 2

PIANO STUDY IN THE 1800s AND 1900s

The Evolution of Piano Study in the United States

The founding of conservatories and music schools with the engagement of legendary authorities to direct pianistic activities and the emergence of the artist-teacher as opposed to a traditional piano teacher were two important factors in the growth of piano study. The first conservatory was founded in Paris in 1795, followed by many others across Europe. Prominent pianists were connected with these conservatories as artist-teachers whose unique role included cultivating the creativity of individual students rather than simply following a systematic approach of pedagogical principles. Liszt was the first great artist-teacher, whose legacy was initially continued through his most famous pupil, Anton Rubinstein. Following Liszt on the European scene was Theodore Leschetizky.³⁰

Many American schools began adding music to their academic curricula after the Civil War in the late 1860s. Independent schools and conservatories were founded in large cities, and music was included in the public school systems.³¹ The Peabody Conservatory was established in 1857. Oberlin was established in 1865. The New England Conservatory, Cincinnati Conservatory, and the Chicago Musical College were established in 1867. The Philadelphia Conservatory entered the scene in 1877.³² An influx of European artists came to the

³⁰ Bolland, "What they Taught," 12-14.

³¹ Cole, "Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler," 76-77.

³² Allen, "Women's Contributions," 413.

United States as either concertizing artists or permanent residents.³³ Eventually, students stopped traveling to Europe for study, choosing instead to find reputable artist-teachers in the United States. Interestingly, over one thousand females, as compared to approximately three hundred males, were registered at the New England Conservatory in the second year of its opening.³⁴

Women began teaching privately in the United States by the eighteenth century, if not earlier, but did not hold posts in music schools of various kinds until the early 1900s. As production of the piano increased in the United States in the early 1900s, the need for more teaching increased. In August 1908, *The Etude* estimated that seventy five to eighty percent of music teachers were women.³⁵ The general attitude, though, was that women were more suited for teaching children due to their nurturing abilities. Men were considered better than women for teaching advanced students. Additionally, lessons were often cheaper with women than with men.³⁶ Few women were considered artist-teachers.

Many of the female teachers taught in their homes. Their typical beginning student was a young girl who walked to her weekly half-hour lesson in her neighborhood. These lessons cost a few cents.³⁷ The lesson probably consisted of finger exercises, scales, and repertoire. These private teachers were authoritarians who “balanced pennies on the backs of her students’ wrists or taught with a ruler in one hand.”³⁸ These teachers had little patience with students who were unprepared for lessons or who ignored their strict tenants of the approach to the piano.³⁹ Some teachers travelled around the community teaching their weekly lessons in the homes of the

³³ Cole, “Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler,” 76-77.

³⁴ Block, “Women in American Music,” 149.

³⁵ Allen, “Women’s Contributions,” 412.

³⁶ Ibid., 413.

³⁷ Sturm, “Celebrating 100 Years,” 30; Cornett-Murtada, “A Short History of Piano Pedagogy,” 567.

³⁸ Cornett-Murtada, “A Short History,” 567.

³⁹ Ibid.

students. Since it was not proper for men to go to students' homes, many of them had their own home studios for teaching the advanced students.⁴⁰

There were no clearly defined standards for piano teachers and no way to easily separate unqualified teachers from those well trained and experienced. Musicians who were focused on teaching rather than performing began producing a variety of method books, which became very popular. These books were written in a series progressively becoming more difficult. They contained lessons for age specific groups, such as preschool, elementary, intermediate, and adult, but they varied greatly in their approach to playing the piano.⁴¹ Without clearly defined standards, the profession did not reach a high level of significance in the early 1900s. Generally, lessons were still regarded as a social activity rather than a serious educational endeavor.⁴²

With the growth in music instruction in homes and schools, prominent artists advocated for teachers to become well trained in skills and musicianship.⁴³ Two things contributed to the education of non-professional teachers: professional music journals such as *The Etude* and *The Musician*, which included, among other things, articles and instructional material written by famous concert artists and leading pedagogues; and, professional music organizations, such as the national and local chapters of the Music Teachers National Association that held conventions and workshops, published their proceedings on a range of music topics, and advocated teacher certification.

⁴⁰ Allen, "Women's Contributions," 412-413.

⁴¹ Sturm, "Celebrating 100 Years," 30.

⁴² Allen, "Women's Contributions," 413.

⁴³ Sturm, "Celebrating 100 Years," 30.

The Development of Group Lessons

In addition to private lessons held in conservatories and homes, the late 1800s and early 1900s also brought about the idea of teaching piano lessons to students in groups. German musician Johann Bernard Logier began teaching his students exclusively in groups in Ireland in 1815. He felt a group setting was ideal for introducing theoretical concepts with application to the keyboard. Teachers from Europe and the United States attended Logier's classes and brought the idea back to their respective countries. By the late 1800s, group piano curriculum was endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education and incorporated into public schools. By the early 1920s, colleges began offering training courses for instructors in class piano, and within a short period of time over one hundred and fifty colleges and universities included it in their course offerings. Class piano eventually evolved into the programs currently in place at colleges and universities.⁴⁴

The benefits of group lessons were many, including, the creation of a social environment where students are supported, motivated, and challenged by their peers; the ability to teach more students in a shorter period of time; the establishment of an environment where students learn from other students' unique talents and abilities; the creation of confident performers early as students eventually become comfortable playing in front of their peers; the exposure to wide variety of repertoire as students learn from other students' repertoire; and, the emphasis on an environment where students focus on improving critical listening and analytical skills when they are not playing.⁴⁵ Class piano was much different than the European master class setting established by notable pianists such as Liszt and Leschetizky, but the benefits were similar.

⁴⁴ Fisher, "Group Piano Teaching," 3-5.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 7-8.

Advances in the Mechanics of Piano Playing

In the nineteenth century, musicians, teachers, and critics became increasingly more interested in the physical skills required to perform music. Early pedagogical thought on technique was directly related to forerunners of the piano. With these instruments, technique involved a quiet hand with all the work done by the fingers. One of the most influential treatises of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach's *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen (Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments)* published in two volumes, the first in 1753 and the second in 1762. The first volume addresses technical concerns and is a source for performance practice of the period. The second volume is a theory manual with thoroughbass and accompaniment procedures. In the treatise, C.P.E. Bach (1714-1788) asserts that a student should sit balanced to the middle of the keyboard with the arms suspended slightly above the keyboard. Fingers should be arched and muscles relaxed allowing for flexibility in crossing fingers, for stretches, and in passing of the thumb. His fingering is a strong foundation for modern technique. Differing from earlier thought, the thumb became an important playing unit. Further, C.P.E. Bach thought the left hand should become more independent and flexible, mainly to handle the new accompaniment styles of the period.⁴⁶ The principle of the fingers doing all of the work with an unmovable hand began to change.

Beethoven (1770-1827) adhered to C.P.E. Bach's *Essay* in lessons with his student, Carl Czerny. Later, Czerny (1791-1857) composed his *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School from the First Rudiments of Playing to the Highest and Most Refined State of Cultivation; With the Requisite Numerous Examples, Newly and Expressly Composed for the Occasion*, Op. 500, published in 1839. Here, Czerny recommends the student sit with the upper

⁴⁶ Uszler, "Historical Overview," 275.

arm slightly extended with the elbows approximately one inch higher than the keys. The forearm and hand are to be horizontal, the fingers curved, and the hand balanced around the middle finger. Finger action involved a series of finger strokes from fingers held close to the keys and pressing down. Czerny cautions to not move the forearm unless absolutely necessary.⁴⁷

Although piano technique was continuing to develop, flexibility with larger muscle units was still limited.

In the mid-nineteenth century, study of the mechanical aspects of playing led to numerous pedagogical works, including a body of literature emphasizing finger action, finger independence, and strength to the exclusion of sensitivity to tone.⁴⁸ As with the Czerny studies, some of these exercises are widely used today, but there are still current debates as to the function of the fingers in such studies.

Pedagogical thought relating to technique started to shift as theorists of the late nineteenth century pondered a relaxed and reliable technique for increased quality of tone production. Ludwig Deppe (1828-1890), a leading figure in this discovery, studied the principles of “muscular synergy,” in which the hand must be freed of the hampering weight of the arm. He felt the arm “should be like lead and the wrist like a feather.”⁴⁹ He recommended sitting low enough so that the forearm would be at an incline from the elbow to the wrist, which would allow the fingers to produce tone by the weight of the hand. He recommended that the wrist be slightly raised with moderately curved fingers and a tilt of the hand towards the thumb. Two of his students, Amy Fay and Elisabeth Caland, explained his position further by introducing the concept of a “controlled free-fall.” In this concept, there is conscious control of the fingers, arm,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 282.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 283. One example is *Hanon: The Virtuoso Pianist in Sixty Exercises* written by Charles Hanon (1820-1900) and first published in 1873.

⁴⁹ Schoenberg, “The Lisztianers and Leschetizkianers,” 292-293.

and hand so that the fingers are not lifted excessively but fall onto the keys. Once the fingers contact the keyboard, the hand, wrist, and arm naturally returns to its playing position. Control of large movements involves an elastic and flexible wrist.⁵⁰

For several decades, weight and relaxation were mainstream ideas among pedagogues and concert pianists. As previously noted, these ideas were in direct opposition to the seemingly out-of-date fixed-hand position. Harriet Brower's *Piano Mastery – Talks with Master Pianists and Teachers*, published in 1915, contains numerous interviews with prominent pianists and teachers who discuss weight and relaxation.⁵¹

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, progressive teachers and artists understood that finger independence and strength, as well as wrist flexibility, were no longer enough. They were convinced that application of certain scientific principles to piano playing would dramatically lessen the amount of work and stress on the body in perfecting technical facility. To some, traditional concepts were completely abandoned. To others, progressive ideas were combined with traditional concepts leading to improved tone production. Weight playing, the use of the arm in connection with the hand and wrist, relaxation, and rotation became topics of consideration.⁵²

In the twentieth century, progressive teachers continued to think about healthy and efficient technique, but they also focused on producing well-rounded individuals rather than virtuoso machines. They focused on the student's cognitive abilities, developmental traits, and personal interests. They established new philosophies relating to student-centered instruction, such as development of aural skills, independent interpretations, and mental study and

⁵⁰ Uszler, "Historical Overview," 285.

⁵¹ Brower, *Piano Mastery*.

⁵² Uszler, "Historical Overview," 297.

concentration.⁵³ Although women outnumbered men in music schools and in teaching, very few were able to become recognized performers or artist-teachers of advanced students.⁵⁴ There was one such pedagogue, however. Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler was highly successful not only as a concert pianist, but also as a master teacher.

⁵³ Sturm, “Celebrating 100 Years,” 29-30.

⁵⁴ Allen, “Women’s Contributions,” 422.

CHAPTER 3

ZEISLER'S PHILOSOPHY AND TEACHING STYLE

Zeisler's Artist Class

It was difficult to receive lessons from great artists during their prime performance years due to their practice and performance schedule, the extent and difficulty of travel, and the attention needed by students. As a result, most artists of this caliber had only a small group of students.⁵⁵ Zeisler taught in a class setting in her home. All students met at the same time in the class receiving an individual lesson for at least a half hour. At first these sessions lasted about two hours, but in later years they lasted five or more. Zeisler's intent was to accept only talented students who intended to pursue music as a profession and who would commit to practice at least three hours per day as well as to study harmony and theory.⁵⁶ She preferred that students come to her already with a working knowledge of keys, chords, and progressions.⁵⁷

Zeisler recognized that every student has a unique hand and body, intelligence, and level of talent. At times, the most talented students who can easily put together showy, but superficial, performances do not take the time to diligently pursue the art. In her opinion, these students are rarely successful. Conversely, students with talent who endure under rigorous study become

⁵⁵ Weber, "Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler's Artist Class," 488.

⁵⁶ Sigmund Zeisler, "Biography," un-paginated.

⁵⁷ Brower, "The Scope of Piano Technique," 211.

great artists. Rather than a highly gifted student, Zeisler preferred to teach an intelligent, sincere, thoughtful student who was willing to work.⁵⁸

Zeisler's music room contained two grand pianos surrounded by trophies and mementos of all her accomplishments and travel.⁵⁹ There were autographed photographs of Anton Rubinstein, Camille Saint-Saens, Richard Strauss, Ignaz Paderewski, Edward MacDowell, Edvard Grieg, Moritz Moskowski, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Gabriel Fauré, Theodor Leschetizky, Walter Damrosch, and Fritz Kreisler, among many others.⁶⁰ At the height of her teaching, at least twenty to thirty students sat in a semi-circle around the pianos.⁶¹ (See Appendix A for photographs of her artist class.⁶²) While a student played, Zeisler sat at the other piano. Sometimes she demonstrated a phrase or two; sometimes she played the entire composition.⁶³

Zeisler's teaching was enthusiastic and inspirational, focused, impartial, and profoundly serious, although often filled with interjections of sharp wit.⁶⁴ She was a stern disciplinarian who demanded perfection. According to one student, Zeisler sought to instill in her students the "spirit of highest endeavor." Another called her a "versatile genius [with a] heroic and inspiring personality."⁶⁵ Zeisler was firm and decisive but full of encouragement. She developed not only musical talent but also integrity of character. Students were taught self-reliance, often getting scolded for asking questions to which they could have found the answers for themselves.⁶⁶

The artist class was conducted exactly as a private lesson would have been conducted. The added benefit was that all students were required to remain for the entirety of the class so

⁵⁸ Ibid., 210.

⁵⁹ Weber, "Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler's Artist Class," 488.

⁶⁰ *Music Magazine*, "An Individual Life and an Epoch," 5.

⁶¹ Troendle, "How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught," 799.

⁶² The Fannie Zeisler Bloomfield Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

⁶³ Weber, "Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler's Artist Class," 488.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

they could observe and learn from each other's lessons. Also, a student was more likely to retain particular pedagogical ideas by hearing them multiple times through different students' lessons. Students brought their own copies of the music so they could follow along, make notes, and copy the correct fingerings, phrasing, pedaling, etc.⁶⁷ Some students recorded Zeisler's exact adages; some made sketches.⁶⁸ (See Appendix B for examples of sketches.⁶⁹)

During the lessons, Zeisler carefully observed the student's hands, fingers, manner, and attitude. Even though her intent was to listen to the entire work presented by the student, she often interrupted many times for instruction. She was tremendously impatient with fundamental errors such as wrong notes and rhythms and continuously declared, "I am here to teach the hundred and fifty things that are not printed."⁷⁰ Zeisler once told a student to "go home and tidy up your dresser drawers. The habit of slovenliness is revealed in all you play." Another student after several unsuccessful attempts told Zeisler that she was not getting the effect she wanted. Zeisler replied, "Effect! You're years from effect. Learn your notes."⁷¹ (See Appendix C for other of Zeisler's maxims.⁷²)

Zeisler was also extremely impatient with mechanical playing, which might evoke a comment such as, "an electric piano will always excel you if your aim is to be mechanical."⁷³ Assistant Theodora Troendle recalled a lesson where Zeisler called a performance of Schumann's *Kreisleriana* "a wretched, colorless, unimaginative performance," and requested that the student bring back only one of the *Kreisleriana* the next week prepared to perfection.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ Weber, "Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler's Artist Class," 489.

⁶⁸ Troendle, "How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught," 799.

⁶⁹ The Fannie Zeisler Bloomfield Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

⁷⁰ Weber, "Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler's Artist Class," 489.

⁷¹ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Weber, "Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler's Artist Class," 492.

⁷⁴ Troendle, "How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught," 799.

Zeisler's criticism, although routinely harsh, was laser-focused on the worst issue in one's playing. The student was thoughtfully shown what was lacking with a suggested remedy. Of course, the next lesson presented a new worst problem area. Although students were terrified of Zeisler's harsh criticism, they experienced many instances of compassion and encouragement. For example, a student was playing the *Allegro con brio* movement of a Beethoven Trio too slowly. The student was upset because she felt she would never play the piece fast. Zeisler replied that maybe she would not play the piece fast, but the "er" in faster was enough to work towards.⁷⁵

Ultimately, the students who survived the rigorous environment idolized Zeisler and wanted to emulate her because of her inspiring teaching and extraordinarily stunning playing. Once a student asked Zeisler a question relating to instruction on phrasing. After a moment's thought, Zeisler said it was one of those things not easy to put into words, so she began playing to illustrate what she meant. She played the adagio movement of Beethoven's "Pathetique" sonata. Zeisler probably intended to play only a short portion of the work, but she continued on until the very end of the movement. The student was emotionally broken due to the extraordinary beauty of Zeisler's playing. When Zeisler asked the student if she understood the illustration, the student replied that she had no idea what the question had been. Initially, Zeisler was highly exasperated by the response, but then she gave a glowing acknowledgment knowing the student had received the message.⁷⁶

Zeisler cared for her students. After a student spent twenty-four hours without food to reach Chicago due to travel problems, Zeisler immediately asked the maid to make her coffee

⁷⁵ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

and sandwiches. Zeisler was so strict that perhaps this was a little out of character for her; it was certainly a gesture that deeply touched the student.⁷⁷

Zeisler often used her influence and resources to help students. In the spring of 1920 while in San Antonio, Texas, Zeisler gave an audition to a seven-year-old girl, Yetta Waxler, at the urging of the girl's teacher who was convinced Yetta was a little genius. Yetta was the youngest of six children in a Jewish family who had recently emigrated from Russia. Zeisler found the child talented and fascinating and decided to accept her as a student if she could come to Chicago. Mrs. Waxler shortly moved with the child to Chicago, and Zeisler arranged for a Steinway piano to be placed in their small apartment for Yetta's practice. Further, Zeisler arranged for Yetta to receive a scholarship in the best private school for girls. Zeisler also arranged for one of her friends to teach theory to Yetta at no cost. Finally, Zeisler asked some of her wealthy friends to contribute to a fund for Yetta's and her mother's living expenses.⁷⁸

Correspondence in the *Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler and Sigmund Zeisler Papers* housed in the Newberry Library reveal that Yetta had a close, personal relationship with Zeisler throughout Zeisler's life. In the *Appreciation*, Yetta called Zeisler a "beloved friend, teacher, and advisor."⁷⁹

It was difficult for Zeisler to describe her own teaching style. Personal contact with the student was the foremost element, along with considering the individual character, temperament, and level of advancement of each student.⁸⁰ To Zeisler, a great pianist had basic qualities, and she worked tirelessly to instill them in her students. These included a beautiful touch with diversity and nuance, enhanced by a solid technical foundation, flawless rhythm, and individuality. Zeisler believed that one could not play the piano if he could not play beyond the printed page.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Armstrong, "Mrs. Bloomfield Zeisler on Study and Repertory," 51-52.

She also believed that inherent in music is words, phrases, sentences, and everything else found in poetry, literature, and speech.⁸¹

In the April 1902 *Philharmonic*, a Chicago magazine devoted to music, Zeisler offered these comments within a symposium of leading music pedagogues on the subject of methods:

There are many roads leading to Rome. If you get there, it matters little how you traveled. Whether you get there depends very little upon the road chosen, and almost altogether upon the amount and quality of the motive power at your command – talent, diligence, endurance, intelligence, etc. Of course there are some roads which never lead to Rome. But among the many which do, there is probably little choice. The very nature of the piano, the mechanical apparatus provided for the production of tones, the range of possibilities as to the variety of tone, color and dynamic shading are, it is true, given quantities. But physical power, temperament, mental force, emotional qualities, the shape and other peculiarities of the hands, and especially of the fingers, present almost as many varieties as there are different individuals. The great teacher is, therefore, he who studies these individual peculiarities and shapes his method according to them. There may be only one correct way to hold the hands, strike the keys, to pass the thumb under, etc., but different pupils will require different exercises, and widely varying studies, to bring about their acquirement of the facility to correctly manipulate the mechanical devices of the instrument. To apply the same method to all pupils without reference to individual peculiarities is like putting them in a procrustean bed. Therefore, I hate the word ‘method.’⁸²

The Importance of Technical Development

Zeisler might not have ascribed to a particular teaching method with respect to working with repertoire and cultivating performing artists, but she definitely had a plan for technical development of her students. She believed strongly that “she could not build the house until the foundation was properly laid.”⁸³ It was not her intention to make technique the most important part of piano study. Technique was a necessity, however, and every pianist should be capable of achieving technical facility far exceeding what was needed in the repertoire. After that, technique was simply the medium through which the pianist brought to life the composer’s

⁸¹ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

⁸² F.B., “Madness in Methods,” 75-76.

⁸³ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

story.⁸⁴ For Zeisler, everything went into technique, including math, grammar, diction and language, poetry, history, and works of art.⁸⁵

Zeisler felt her technical ideas were naturally inherent to the body. Zeisler's development of technique began with the correct position of the hand. Next, the two most important physical elements were firm fingers and a loose wrist.⁸⁶ After that, every unnecessary movement at the piano was to be eliminated.⁸⁷

Zeisler's technical ideas were built on the following concepts:

1. The hand position on the keyboard should be the same as when hanging at one's side while walking;
2. The knuckles of the four fingers should be a little higher than the wrist and the joints of the fingers;
3. The knuckle of the middle finger should be a little higher than the others with the hand sloping down to the little finger on one side and the thumb on the other;
4. The thumb and little finger should naturally strike on the sides of their tips;
5. All fingers should be curved whenever possible;
6. The first and second joints in the fingers should be firm and immovable; and,
7. The fingers should be raised just as high as they naturally move without any strain.

To Zeisler, "the fingers [are to be] like steel, and the wrist like a feather."⁸⁸ These ideas were much more advanced than ideas related to early technical training, like that of Czerny, for example. Zeisler's ideas stemmed from the developing progressive thought about finger, hand, and wrist function and weight and relaxation. Unfortunately, there are not known writings concerning Zeisler's ideas on the function of the arm.

As with her study with Leschetizky, all students were subjected to rigorous training to develop firmness of the fingers. Students worked through a course of finger exercises lasting

⁸⁴ Wilson, "With a Study of her Hands," 11.

⁸⁵ Brower, "The Scope of Piano Technique," 210.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Weber, "Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler's Artist Class," 490.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

four to eight weeks. During this time, they were not allowed to practice any repertoire.⁸⁹ Zeisler had her own preparatory exercises that every student had to master before being admitted as a regular student. The exercises were simple so that they were easily learned, but they were not easy to master.⁹⁰ According to Troendle, none of Zeisler's exercises were published. Zeisler, however, contributed at least one set of original exercises to Alberto Jonás' *Master School of Virtuoso Piano Playing*, a seven-volume compendium of exercises for the development of a virtuoso piano technique, part of which was originally published in 1922. (See Appendix D.⁹¹) These exercises were specifically used to promote evenness and strength and to stretch the ligaments between the fingers.⁹²

Agnes Lapham was in the first class Zeisler took through the five-finger exercises. She reported that every Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Zeisler listened to the same five-finger exercises from every student, because she didn't trust anyone else to do it for her. Although new students were always instructed to play only the five-finger exercises, sometimes they continued to play their repertoire. Zeisler reprimanded them by saying their own misconduct would be punishment enough.⁹³

Later, Zeisler appointed assistants to work on the exercises with the students, as she discovered she disliked working with students during this process.⁹⁴ Becoming an assistant was a coveted position in Zeisler's studio. Student Ruth Wydman Jarmie remembers the day Zeisler named Carol Robinson an assistant in class. At that moment, Jarmie vowed to direct all her energies to the same goal.⁹⁵ Robinson was Zeisler's assistant for seven years, working through

⁸⁹ Ibid., 489; Troendle, "How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught," 799.

⁹⁰ Troendle, "How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler, Taught," 799.

⁹¹ Jonás, *Master School of Virtuoso Piano Playing*, 161-162.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

⁹⁴ Troendle, "How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught," 800.

⁹⁵ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

exercises and preparatory studies with students prior to their acceptance as a full student in Zeisler's studio.⁹⁶

After the student perfected five-finger exercises, consisting of numerous combinations, they began thumb-crossing exercises in preparation for playing scales. These exercises initially targeted fingers 1, 2, and 3. First, the student held the keys d and e down with their 2nd and 3rd fingers while the thumb repeatedly crossed from c to f (See Measure 1 in Figure 1 below). Next, the student held down the key e, while practicing the movement of keys c, d, and f (See Measure 2). Then, the student held down the key d, while practicing the movement of keys c, e, and f (See Measure 3). Last, the student practiced movement of all four keys (See Measure 4). A similar exercise was required while working on the rest of the scale, with the crossing of the thumb from f to c and holding the various keys g, a, and b in a corresponding manner (See Measures 5-12). This exercise was required for each hand.⁹⁷

Figure 1: Thumb Crossing Exercises

⁹⁶ Goss, *Music and the Moderns*, 7.

⁹⁷ Weber, "Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler's Artist Class," 490-491.

After scales, the student worked on arpeggios in a similar fashion. The student would hold the 2nd finger on e and the 3rd finger on g while the thumb crosses from c to its octave. Then, the student would hold on g while movements from c, e, to octave c were practiced, then hold on e while practicing movements c, g, to octave c. Zeisler had similar exercises for chords. Zeisler would routinely assign students variations of these exercises based on individual needs.⁹⁸

Once these preparatory exercises were mastered, the student studied scales in all their forms and manifestations, including scales in double thirds and octaves.⁹⁹ Scales were to be played with firm fingers and a loose wrist in a moderate tempo set by a metronome. Sometimes students were asked to play their scales very slowly, each hand separately, with an accent on the finger that falls before the thumb. In order to build endurance, students were required to practice one scale without stopping until the hands were fatigued but not cramped. Eventually, the student added all forms of arpeggios to the practice routine.¹⁰⁰

Once the five-finger exercises, scales, and arpeggios were mastered, the student moved to Czerny exercises, either to Op. 299 or to Op. 740 if the student had considerable technique. Since Czerny taught Leschetizky, and since Leschetizky required Czerny exercises of all his students, including Zeisler, she felt these exercises, as well as Bach compositions, were best for her students. Zeisler required these exercises to be performed by memory and played with a steady tempo and even touch without pedal and without hesitancy. A metronome would be required with any evidence of uneven rhythm. Zeisler would explain the various types of

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Troendle, “How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught,” 799.

¹⁰⁰ Weber, “Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler’s Artist Class,” 490-491.

exercises and etudes studies, discuss the procedure, and play illustrations from various Chopin studies with clarity of touch, for which she was famous.¹⁰¹

Along with Czerny exercises, students were usually assigned Bach Inventions. In Bach, Zeisler demanded clean phrasing with a legato tone and variations of touch that imitated different organ registrations. She required the student to pay close attention to the smallest details, such as the proper handling of various ornaments. Students also had to memorize the Inventions and play them without hesitation. Following Bach Inventions, students were assigned Bach Preludes and Fugues, etudes by Chopin, Liszt, and Henselt, and octave studies by Kullak. A few months later, a student would be allowed to play another piece by a standard composer.¹⁰² Any student demonstrating a stiff wrist during a lesson was immediately subjected again to a limbering process to the exclusion of all repertoire. Zeisler believed “you might as well attempt to pass through a solid wall as to try to play the piano with a solid wrist.”¹⁰³

Although most of the literature relating to Zeisler only discusses the development of finger strength through exercises and studies, one interesting note came to light in an interview with Zeisler by Harriette Brower. Zeisler acknowledged that no matter how many years a student practiced the exercises, the fourth finger would never be as strong as the thumb. Therefore, adjustment of weight and pressure of each finger was necessary so that all the fingers sound equal and balanced. Zeisler stated that with correct study, students learn to lessen weight on the strong fingers and increase weight on the weaker fingers.¹⁰⁴ These statements are as close to revealing a philosophy of weight transfer as can be found in the existing research.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 491-492.

¹⁰² Ibid., 492.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 489.

¹⁰⁴ Brower, “The Scope of Piano Technique,” 214.

Ideas on Practice and Performance

Zeisler believed that systematic, concentrated effort in practice produced correct playing and was the secret of success in any field.¹⁰⁵ It was a life-long process, and there was no substitute for it. She wanted her students to have a set time for practice, advising that the morning hours were best after the body was refreshed from sleep. Students needed to practice four to five hours a day as long as the mind stayed engaged. Moving the fingers was not practicing, because in her opinion the fingers only do one-fourth of the work while the mind handles the rest.¹⁰⁶ In practice, several things were important including diligently studying scores to understand structure; learning about composers and their styles; carefully working out fingerings; practicing slowly, often hands apart; and working on memorization from the beginning.

Zeisler continuously stressed the importance of fingering to her students, not only for maintaining good technical facility, but also for correct tonal balance within each phrase of the music. Students were encouraged to pay close attention to the fingering in their score since the editor spent a great deal of time and effort working out fingering. Fingering, however, had to conform to the natural position of the hand, and therefore, the student needed to practice all possibilities until one emerged as the best choice. Zeisler preferred students write their fingering in the score once it was solidified.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Troendle, “How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught,” 799.

¹⁰⁶ Armstrong, “Zeisler on Study and Repertoire,” 51-52.

¹⁰⁷ Troendle, “How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught,” 799; Weber, “Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler’s Artist Class,” 493.

Zeisler was always concerned with clarity. For example, a very delicate piece had to be practiced with great firmness or the pianissimo would be blurry and weak. Zeisler related this type of practice to walking on one's tiptoes, which takes more muscular strength than normal walking.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, strong fingers were to fall on the important notes in order for the phrase or line to contain correct inflection. Students were to learn principles of singing to understand phrasing and nuance.¹⁰⁹

Zeisler advocated slow practice for her students. She rarely played through her performance pieces at full tempo knowing that without the time to process and reinforce correct technique, fingerings, and inflections, small errors would slowly begin to creep into those polished works. She required her students to play their piece slowly and carefully in the first few lessons of that work.¹¹⁰ She often told her students that if you can only play the piece fast, you really do not know it.¹¹¹ In lessons, Zeisler consistently gave invaluable assistance in the way to work. Student Mabel Riggs Stead wrote, “Out of her broad experience, Mrs. Zeisler has given each one of us many valuable possessions, but there is one which I feel is particularly Zeislerlike – the knowing how to study.”¹¹²

Memorization was required from the beginning of work on a particular piece. Zeisler insisted students were to use their “conscious memory” rather than their “subconscious memory.”¹¹³ Zeisler often shared stories of memory lapses, including her own and those by her contemporaries, such as Anton Rubinstein.¹¹⁴ Zeisler advised her students to play through the piece a few times in order to obtain the general style of the work and then to study their scores.

¹⁰⁸ Troendle, “How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught,” 799.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Brower, “The Scope of Piano Technique,” 216.

¹¹¹ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Troendle, “How Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Taught,” 799.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

They were to memorize the first phrase or line, playing through it numerous times until hands were fatigued but not in pain. Students were to learn the next phrase in the same manner adding it to the first. They were to continue this pattern until the entire piece was fully memorized and the mechanical process, as well as, the knowledge of the rhythmic and harmonic structure was in place. Once the piece was secure without any uncertainty, the student put it away for three to six months.¹¹⁵ Then, they were to review the memory again. She felt the second memorization effort was more important than the original effort.¹¹⁶ Zeisler applied this principle to her own preparation and study:

Do all you can with a piece the first time of study, then put it away, forget it. Certain points that you have gotten fidgety and nervous over you will meet in a fresh, neutral state of mind when you take it up again. It sinks in and becomes a part of yourself.¹¹⁷

To Zeisler, the student had to know everything. Zeisler helped them understand the composers and their styles. For example, Zeisler taught about Beethoven's life in Vienna at the time of the Napoleonic wars, and she discussed the military reflections in his music. She believed the Beethoven sonatas were simplified versions of symphonic form, and she explained the orchestral elements in them, asking her students to imitate sounds and articulations of the woodwinds, brass, strings, and percussion.¹¹⁸

Zeisler believed correct interpretation of a musical work implied an understanding of its content and a comprehension of the ideas and mood used by the composer for musical expression. Once there is an understanding of what the composer had in mind, an intelligent analysis of form or method used to convey the idea should be undertaken. Thereafter, one's personal thoughts become involved, which accounts for the variety in interpretation for every

¹¹⁵ Weber, "Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler's Artist Class," 492-494.

¹¹⁶ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

¹¹⁷ Armstrong, "Zeisler on Study and Repertoire," 51-52.

¹¹⁸ Troendle, "How Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Taught," 799.

composition. She felt teachers and their students often ignored this dissecting process. Zeisler preferred to study music “perpendicularly instead of horizontally.”¹¹⁹ To her, in order to achieve clarity and insight, every student had to analyze a composition as a whole, study every section in relation to the whole, and study every phrase in relation to its section.¹²⁰

Troendle reports that Zeisler felt music must tell a story, present a mood or a philosophy, or bring to the imagination a pictorial scene.¹²¹ Understanding the composer was invaluable to her. Composers such as Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven were easier to understand since so much is written into the scores. On the other hand, it takes great effort to understand and convey the mood of the Romantic storytellers and the French and modern composers.¹²²

Students were not allowed any individual interpretation on a piece until their work had settled and matured in their minds.¹²³ In working with interpretation, Zeisler tried to engage the imagination of her students. They talked about the character of the piece and tried to interpret its meaning. They tried to feel the rhythm of the music to understand the spirit. They worked on variety in the music, especially with presentation and repetition of themes. She showed the students her ideas, but she wanted the students to come to their own interpretative conclusions.¹²⁴

On one occasion, a student was playing a polonaise by Liszt. His goal was to cover the technical demands first, then interpretation second. Zeisler gave a scathing review of his lack of expression. The student complained that he lacked the technique, not the expression. An exasperated Zeisler in her great wisdom asked the student to play an interpretation of his feelings without any concern for technical matters. The student, having become angry by the exchange

¹¹⁹ Zeisler, “How I Play Schumann,” 292.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Troendle, “How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught,” 800.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Weber, “Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler’s Artist Class,” 492-494.

¹²⁴ Brower, “The Scope of Piano Technique, 211-212.

with her, played the piece again with all of his emotion. Zeisler told her student he should never present the piece without that emotional message, and, as an aside, she assured him his technique was fine. Sometime later, this same student passed by Zeisler's studio and overheard her playing a Chopin etude. He was so struck by the beauty and brilliancy of her playing that he stopped where he was going to stay and listen intently. After that, he passed by her studio many times standing outside on the porch listening for impromptu concerts by the great artist.¹²⁵

In an article submitted to *The Etude*, Zeisler listed "ten practice rules" invaluable for all students, summarized as follows:

1. Students are to intensely concentrate during their practice;
2. Students should practice four hours per day, dividing their practice time into two-hour sessions; one hour should be devoted to technical work, one to Bach works, and two hours for other repertoire;
3. Students should play through the entire work a few times before beginning memory work; after the memory is secure, students should focus on problem areas for more reiteration;
4. Students should always practice slowly to allow for maximum concentration; once the piece is learned to tempo, students, as well as performers, should return to slow practice;
5. In order to avoid mistakes, students should only work on a single phrase or a small section no greater than sixteen measures in the early stages of learning;
6. Students should mentally memorize a section before attempting to play it; if they do not remember it well enough to practice it by memory, they do not understand the musical content;
7. On occasion for a different level of concentration, students should learn the last phrase first, add the preceding phrase to that, and continue with this process until the entire work is memorized;
8. Students should practice slowly and carefully to insure correct fingering, phrasing, tone, touch, pedaling, and dynamics as careless playing produces problems difficult to correct later;
9. Students should always listen while playing;
10. Students should only perform music that has become inherent to them; they should work through the piece and put it away several times for digestion before bringing it out for performance.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated. According to Sigmund Zeisler's biography, this student, Robert Stevens, became the Director of Music at the University of Chicago.

¹²⁶ Zeisler, "Ten Practice Rules," 237.

Zeisler believed pedaling was an art and science of its own, and occasionally she would use an entire lesson for that one subject. Like some of the early masters, she called the pedal, “the soul of the piano.”¹²⁷ To her, the importance of the pedal was to enhance the beauty of the line, as well as to sustain tones. Since pedaling depended on many factors, such as facility of the player, vibrancy of the piano, and acoustics of a particular room, the performer had to learn to adjust pedaling simultaneously with a performance. Zeisler noted that the chief delineation between a gifted amateur and an artist was pedaling and phrasing.¹²⁸

An interesting concept of Zeisler’s teaching was the problem with nervousness in performance. Zeisler felt nervousness was, in reality, egotism, or trying to make a good impression for the wrong reasons. She taught students to play for the sake of the art and to listen and judge their own playing. She often remarked that if a student did not listen to his own playing, no one else would listen either. Zeisler believed recurrent public performance was necessary to stop nervousness or stage fright and to gain self-confidence. Early experiences with performances should be recitals at the teacher’s home or in the student’s hometown. Performances on a larger scale should occur only after a student obtains a certain level of physical and mental maturity. It was her experience that child prodigies became excessively self-conscious, self-absorbed, and easily content with a chance of undermining their health. Even though Zeisler began her career as a young girl, she felt the vigorous training for several years under Leschetizky allowed her to reach full physical and artistic maturity. She was able to sustain a long concert career because of it.¹²⁹

Zeisler believed that one must be a severe critic of her own work and achievements striving to overcome deficiencies while improving on what is already good. To her, there was no

¹²⁷ Troendle, “How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught,” 799.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 799-800.

¹²⁹ Zeisler, “The Secret of Public Appearance,” 761.

particular road to success except that of long hours of conscientious work with strict attention to detail.¹³⁰

Repertoire Choices

Zeisler believed skill in the arrangement of programs had much to do with an artist's success. Programs had to look attractive by containing works that interest audiences, and programs had to sound good by containing contrasts in the tonal nature and character. Works had to be placed in an order where the audience's interest increases as the program progresses. The program should illustrate the skill of the performer and teach, entertain, and elevate the audience.¹³¹ Zeisler compared a good program to an appetizing and thoughtful meal. The classical sonata, or an equivalent work, was the main dish that should be balanced by tartness and novelty.¹³² Zeisler encouraged her students to study the programs of the most successful artists to try to understand the thought-process motivating the arrangement of the works.¹³³

Zeisler did not allow her students to perform works beyond their grasp and felt it was the greatest flaw in the American musical system of the day.¹³⁴ As previously noted, she emphasized the study of Bach for students, as she felt it was not pursued as much as it should have been. In a 1908 article for *The Etude*, Zeisler commented that mental technique could not be achieved outside the study of Bach's keyboard works because of the difficulty of the contrapuntal lines. Students had to learn how to handle making themes diverse and individualized while relating them to the work as a whole. Additionally, studying and practicing Bach has a refining influence on one's technique. Each student must acquire a polished touch for clarity in performance.

¹³⁰ Wilson, "With a Study of Her Hands," 11.

¹³¹ Zeisler, "The Secret of Public Appearance," 761.

¹³² Troendle, "How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught," 800.

¹³³ Zeisler, "The Secret of Public Appearance," 761.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Further, the successful study of Bach contributes to a student's confidence that translates to the audience.¹³⁵ Zeisler conveyed to the students that among the many things Bach teaches are a good thinking mind, independence of fingers, carrying of voices, different touches, and phrasing.¹³⁶

In a 1905 interview with William Armstrong for *The Etude*, Zeisler compared the study of Mozart with the study of Chopin. To Zeisler, Mozart is one of the most difficult composers to study. His works require “simplicity and purity... foreign to the decadent moderns.”¹³⁷ To play his music, Zeisler believes one must transport back to a time of “wigs, snuffboxes, and mincing minuets.”¹³⁸ In her interview, she stated that a Liszt player, for example, might not be able to handle Mozart. Finding the right emotional balance for Mozart, as well as technique, is difficult. In her experience, it is easier for less mature players to handle Chopin than Mozart. She believes, however, that there are common attributes in Chopin and Mozart, which includes the purity and elegance demanded by both. She recommended the following Mozart compositions as teaching pieces: the Sonata in F major; the Sonata in A Major, K. 331; and the Fantasy in C Minor, K. 475.¹³⁹ She also recommended the Piano Concerto in E-flat Major and the Piano Concerto in D Minor, K. 466.¹⁴⁰ Admittedly, Zeisler rarely gave Mozart to her students due to the endless scales, arpeggios, and passagework that must be handled with complete clarity.¹⁴¹

Zeisler was very fond of Grieg’s music admiring his compositional sincerity and honesty. She regarded the Ballade, Op. 24 as Grieg’s greatest work for the piano. She also loved his Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16. To Zeisler, Grieg’s fame was in his lyrical smaller pieces

¹³⁵ Zeisler, “The Secret of Public Appearance.” 761.

¹³⁶ Troendle, “How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught,” 799.

¹³⁷ Armstrong, “Zeisler on Study and Repertoire,” 51.

¹³⁸ Brower, “The Scope of Piano Technique,” 215.

¹³⁹ Zeisler did not specify which of the F Major sonatas she was referencing.

¹⁴⁰ Zeisler did not specify which of the E-flat Major concertos she was referencing.

¹⁴¹ Armstrong, “Zeisler on Study and Repertoire,” 51-52.

that were exquisite in color and full of delicacy. She also greatly admired his piano and violin sonatas.¹⁴²

Zeisler tried to include pieces by modern composers on her recital programs, finding her audiences generally receptive to them. She looked for well-written pieces by composers with long-term potential. She told her students, “the menu of a dinner cannot be all soup and beefsteak. There must also be some light little things....”¹⁴³ She assigned Schütt, Poldini, Moszkowski, Godard, and Chabrier as charming examples of modern, lighter works.¹⁴⁴

Development of Well-Rounded Individuals

Zeisler was known as a beloved friend, teacher, and mentor. Student Nellie Killian called her a “keen observer, tremendously interested in all fields of knowledge and phases of human endeavor.”¹⁴⁵ Zeisler talked with her students about her contemporaries and her predecessors. She entertained them with fascinating bits of stories, mostly from real life scenarios. Zeisler’s students were compelled to read the best books, to surround themselves with the best music, to appreciate all the arts, and to strive for a broad culture and a deep philosophy of life. According to Student Ruth Wydman Jarmie, Zeisler “had an inexhaustible fund of keen rapid-fire comment on world affairs.” This was a student that Zeisler helped with some personal financial troubles.¹⁴⁶

Zeisler provided her students with many cultural opportunities. For example, she took her students to the opera on a regular basis. She also invited them to attend the “at home” concerts held the last Wednesday of each month at her home where they met celebrities from all over the world. These concerts consisted of piano, violin, singing, and ensemble playing.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Occasionally, someone read a paper or performed a dramatic monologue. Guests often talked about politics or popular culture of the day. Sometimes there were fifteen guests; sometimes there were around one hundred. Occasionally, students were asked to play, and, of course, those students considered it a great honor. These gatherings lasted almost twenty years.¹⁴⁷ They were considered a social institution, as they were the only European salon-type event in Chicago.¹⁴⁸ The gatherings were quite remarkable for bringing together men, women, students, musicians, politicians, educators, professionals, and Jewish and non-Jewish people.

Carol Robinson described those Wednesday salons as being festive with beautiful rugs on the piano stage surrounded by lights, flowers, paintings, sculpture, and photographs of celebrities. She reported that people listened to solo and chamber performances by distinguished artists, and at times, Zeisler gave her gifted students the opportunity to play. Robinson enjoyed listening to a wide range of conversation. These were so influential on her that she held similar gatherings during her teaching career.¹⁴⁹

Zeisler interacted with people she met with humanity and compassion. On one occasion, Zeisler took the time to examine Anna Tomlinson Boyd's book *Forty Lessons in Hand Development* before their first meeting, although she had been very sick and confined to bed. Zeisler carefully noted every phrase in which the meaning was not clear to her. She also marked every typographical error. Boyd called this gesture a "voluntary kindness and thoroughness that impressed her beyond words," and she found it invaluable in preparing the book for a new edition.¹⁵⁰ Student Rowena Gailey described her connection with Zeisler as follows:

Although I enjoyed the great privilege of studying with Mrs. Zeisler for some time, I am not following the profession of music, but am making a home for young women who are

¹⁴⁷ Sigmund Zeisler, "Biography," un-paginated.

¹⁴⁸ *The National Cyclopedias*, "Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler," 193.

¹⁴⁹ Goss, *Music and the Moderns*, 6-7.

¹⁵⁰ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

out in the world battling their way.... I maintain that the principles of piano playing as taught by Mrs. Zeisler may be applied to all the activities which go to make up home life.... Many a busy home-maker would do well to keep herself relaxed, concentrate on the work or problem at hand, whatever it might be, giving the utmost care and attention to the smallest detail; to attempt to do nothing fast until it had been mastered at a slow tempo, not failing, however, to speed up after the thing is mastered; being careful to do a thing correctly the first time she does it in order that she may have nothing to undo. Economy of motion is vitally important to the homemaker.... let nothing discourage her, and "keep on playing though the chandeliers fall down during the performance," when the concert is over she would certainly be entitled to many curtain calls, and would be in a position to respond with dignity and pride.¹⁵¹

Zeisler gave practical suggestions in her writings about pursuing a professional career.

First, one must look deeply within to determine whether she is naturally talented or, on the other hand, just simply smart. One should also seek the advice of unbiased professional musicians, and one should spend a great deal of time thinking about the difficulties in becoming a successful artist. Once the decision has been made to move forward as a concert artist, one should not let anything impede the thorough study of music, except maintaining good health. The concert artist should only do those things that bring self-respect and respect of her best friends. Even though it is important to study the public and their expectations, the artist should never lower standards to please them. In order to broaden the mind, an artist must read literature, appreciate art, and travel extensively to experience other cultures. Further, an artist must stay authentic, especially while on stage. Last, an artist should be her own most severe critic, never easily satisfied with a performance. The standard should be perfection.¹⁵²

Although the scope of this study does not focus on the lineage after Zeisler's teaching, it is significant to note some of her successful students. Assistant Carol Robinson became a distinguished teacher, pianist, and composer. She appeared with several American orchestras and was a participant in a number of modern-music performances over more than two decades

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Zeisler, "The Secret of Public Appearance," 762.

beginning in the 1920's. She taught at the Dalcroze School in New York. She also taught at Smith College in Massachusetts. Robinson was a close friend of George Antheil and Henry Cowell, often premiering their new works. She championed the works of *Les Six*, Stravinsky, Debussy, Bartok, Scriabin, and Satie across the United States.¹⁵³ Six other distinguished pianists from her studio were Henry Purmort Eames, a concert pianist who served on the faculty of the American Conservatory of Music; Assistant Theodora Troendle, concert pianist and composer whose works were featured by prominent American pianists; Louis Victor Saar, an internationally recognized concert pianist and composer who became the Dean of Faculty of the Chicago College of Music; Rudolph Reuter, a concert pianist who performed extensively in Europe and the United States; Silvio Scionti, a concert pianist who served on the faculty of the American Conservatory; and, Sidney Silber, a concert pianist and prominent pedagogue who served as the Dean of the Sherwood Music School in Chicago. Silber wrote *Reflections for Music Students*. Reuter taught in the artist class environment like Zeisler when not on tour.¹⁵⁴ Another assistant, Julia Alice Druley, taught piano at DePauw University for fifty years from 1883 to 1933.¹⁵⁵ Marie Seuel-Holst was a pianist, organist, teacher, and composer.¹⁵⁶ She published many elementary and intermediate teaching pieces.¹⁵⁷ As previously noted, Robert Stevens became the Director of Music at the University of Chicago.¹⁵⁸ This list is only a small sample. Zeisler nurtured many others who achieved great success as professionals and teachers.

¹⁵³ Goss, *Music and the Moderns*, 1-25.

¹⁵⁴ *Music Magazine*, "Six Distinguished Chicago Concert Artists", 15.

¹⁵⁵ DePauw University, "Duplexes Named in Honor of Distinctive Individuals," un-paginated.

¹⁵⁶ Hixon, *Women in Music*, 987.

¹⁵⁷ An advertisement in the *American Music Teacher*, Vol. 3, No. 3 published January-February 1954, publicized Seuel-Holst's *Work and Pleasure*. This collection is described as twelve short melodious studies designed for the equal development of both hands. In it "one must think, move fingers and arms, listen, feel and enjoy." Additionally, Seuel-Holst's composition "Pirates Bold" was included in *The Music Tree: Student's Choice*, Part 3, selected and edited by Frances Clark, Louise Goss, and Sam Holland, published by Summy Birchard Music, and exclusively distributed by Alfred Music. The Willis Music Company published many of her works.

¹⁵⁸ See footnote 125 on page 37.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSFERENCE OF THE LESCHETIZKY STANDARDS TO THE UNITED STATES

Zeisler's Master Teacher

It is clear how Zeisler's teaching philosophy developed. Theodor Leschetizky (1830-1915) was different than many other musicians. He did not struggle for his place in the musical world, as he was brought up with the best training and opportunities. His father was the master of music for Count Potocki in Poland but gave up that position to take Leschetizky to Vienna to study with Czerny, a student and close friend of Beethoven. From Czerny, Leschetizky learned Beethoven's interpretative ideas and the highest level of virtuoso playing. Additionally, Leschetizky learned much about Chopin's playing and compositions from Chopin's student, Filtsch, who became a close friend.¹⁵⁹ Connections with these two individuals made Leschetizky an expert in the music of Beethoven and Chopin. A further influence on Leschetizky was Bohemian pianist and composer, Jules Schulhoff, whom he heard play in 1850. Mesmerized by Schulhoff's tone quality and sophisticated phrasing, Leschetizky's attitude towards music immediately changed:

...my heart overflowed with indescribable emotions as I listened. Not a note escaped me. I began to foresee a new style of playing. That melody standing out in bold relief, that wonderful sonority – all this must be due to a new and entirely different touch...¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Jenkins, "Theodor Leschetizky," 504-506.

¹⁶⁰ Schonberg, "The Lisztianers and Leschetizkianers", 299.

Leschetizky was determined to find and imitate that beauty, if not surpass it.¹⁶¹ He practiced incessantly, studying the five fingers until he realized how to attain firm fingers with a light wrist.¹⁶² As mentioned previously, this was the time Deppe was thinking about theories of arm weight and relaxation. Leschetizky soon discovered these concepts for himself in producing that coveted exquisite tone.

Leschetizky realized that he must give of his very best to be a world-class musician. He also realized that he must attentively study other arts and disciplines. He was a composer, a conductor, a virtuoso pianist, a chamber musician, and a teacher. Astoundingly, Leschetizky held a degree in law.¹⁶³ He was the first person to become famous as a teacher to the degree that Chopin and Liszt became famous as performers and composers.¹⁶⁴

Leschetizky spent many years as a concert pianist traveling all over Europe. Leschetizky had an electric disposition and his playing was magnificent. He had at his command tone production, phrasing, and interpretation. Nothing escaped his attention. He knew the musical literature, and he knew the performers. At the height of his career, no other pianist could surpass him in technical facility.¹⁶⁵

Although he could be severe and intolerant in lessons, Leschetizky was born to teach.¹⁶⁶ In the early 1860s, he helped Anton Rubinstein with the development of the St. Petersburg Conservatory in Russia, eventually becoming the head of the piano department. In 1878, Leschetizky moved back to Vienna where he spent the rest of his life. Students rushed to Vienna to study with him. He taught over one thousand students in his career.¹⁶⁷ Zeisler was his first and

¹⁶¹ Jenkins, “Theodor Leschetizky,” 504-505.

¹⁶² Schonberg, “The Lisztianers and Leschetizkianers,” 299.

¹⁶³ Jenkins, “Theodor Leschetizky,” 504-505.

¹⁶⁴ Bolland, “What they Taught,” 14.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Pirani, “From Liszt to Leschetizky,” 728.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.; Gerig, *Famous Pianists*, 271-272.

undoubtedly his most prominent American student. Notably, Zeisler brought Leschetizky's name to mainstream America when she performed at the 1885 Annual Meeting of the Music Teachers National Association. Teachers from all over the country in attendance at the convention wanted to know with whom this pianist studied. Within a few years, Leschetizky's name was commonplace.¹⁶⁸

How Leschetizky Taught

Leschetizky was only interested in students who had excellent technical facility, a sharp mind, great strength, and an interesting personality. To those who fit the mold, Leschetizky brought out the very best.¹⁶⁹ Leschetizky was impatient with students who copied great artists or followed his instructions literally without independent thought. He insisted that his students develop their own interpretative abilities, and those who could not do so were asked to study elsewhere.¹⁷⁰

Leschetizky taught private lessons as well as lessons in a class setting.¹⁷¹ Each student in the class was to receive an hour of teaching time, but sometimes the lesson was extended to two hours.¹⁷² Eventually, Leschetizky taught fewer private lessons focusing his time on the class setting. Leschetizky would sit at the second piano, carefully observing the student for detailed evaluation. Often, Leschetizky would play the entire work for the class to demonstrate a particular point.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Huneker, "Was Leschetizky a Greater Teacher than Liszt?," 11.

¹⁶⁹ Gardner, "Leschetizky and His School," 89.

¹⁷⁰ Woodhouse, "How Leschetizky Taught," 220.

¹⁷¹ Gardner, "Leschetizky and His School," 87.

¹⁷² Woodhouse, "How Leschetizky Taught," 222.

¹⁷³ Gardner, "Leschetizky and His School," 89.

One of Leschetizky's assistants and biographer, Annette Hullah, reports that her class met weekly at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday afternoons and lasted four or five hours. The studio was arranged in a concert-hall type setting. In the early days, when there were not as many students, the class was informal. Attendance was mandatory with each student receiving a lesson on his choice piece performed that day, although the lesson was not as thorough as a private lesson would have been. As the number of students increased, the class turned into more of a public performance held biweekly with students' attendance optional. Leschetizky asked only his best students to play. Outside guests were invited to attend, and visiting artists in Vienna were invited to perform. Hullah states this type of class was much different from all other piano classes, especially in the conservatories where students did not intermingle with the public.¹⁷⁴ Liszt held similar classes, but his were held "for the love of music," whereas Leschetizky's classes were held "for the study of music."¹⁷⁵

Liszt (1811-1886), who had also studied with Czerny, taught from his early years until his dying days. The establishment of the master class occurred when he settled in Weimar in 1869. While he was in residence, he held classes three times per week from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Students came to him upon recommendations of Kings, Princesses, and musical celebrities. Some students played for him one time. Some did not make it past a few pages of a work before they were dismissed. Only students with outstanding talent became associated with him for any extended period of time. According to his students, Liszt never wrote about his personal teaching method or philosophy. He did not give specific technical instruction because he assumed students who came to him were already well prepared in the mechanics of playing the piano. Since he did not take interest in mechanics, students watched his technique closely trying

¹⁷⁴ Hullah, *Theodor Leschetizky*, 66-69.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 69.

to reproduce it. Liszt's focus was on matters of interpretation. He looked at pieces measure by measure to discover a composer's intention. He concentrated on the spiritual and intellectual content of the music.¹⁷⁶ Liszt' student, Tausig, held similar classes, as well, but he did not continue them for very long. According to Hullah, Leschetizky's artist class was the only one of its kind.¹⁷⁷

In describing his lessons with Leschetizky, student George Woodhouse divulged that he absorbed more in class lessons than in private lessons. Woodhouse marveled at Leschetizky's demonstrations of difficult passages for each student and ways to solve various problems.¹⁷⁸ Woodhouse recalled one class where a student struggled with muddy pedaling. Leschetizky knew the student was not listening carefully to his own playing. He asked the student to play the passage again but to stop upon command by removing his arms from the piano while continuing to press the pedal. The student could not remove his foot from the pedal fast enough once he gave his attention to the sound.¹⁷⁹

Woodhouse spoke of another interesting event during a class session. Leschetizky asked a student to shadow on his piano a particular work by playing pianissimo while Leschetizky performed on the second piano an interpretation of the work. Because of Leschetizky's elevated interpretative art, this was an illuminating experience that left the students fully inspired.¹⁸⁰

Leschetizky was aware that people claimed he had developed a new method for teaching, but he maintained that he taught in the same manner that Czerny taught him, which was without any fixed method. He also knew he was considered a "hard master," and in that respect he also

¹⁷⁶ Hedley, "Liszt the Pianist and Teacher," 30-35.

¹⁷⁷ Hullah, *Theodor Leschetizky*, 66-69.

¹⁷⁸ Woodhouse, "How Leschetizky Taught," 223.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 225-226.

tried to emulate Czerny.¹⁸¹ Student Roy Gardner knew that Leschetizky had been treated badly by Czerny, often having a book thrown at his head or getting tossed out of the room. In Czerny's day, the master was superior to the student and could conduct himself in any manner he pleased, and this idea carried over somewhat to Leschetizky's teaching.¹⁸² Student George Woodhouse once gave Leschetizky the excuse that he was not in the mood to play well. Leschetizky could not understand why mood had anything to do with his lesson. To Leschetizky, all that mattered was whether Woodhouse had practiced and prepared.¹⁸³

In a 1909 interview given exclusively for *The Etude*, Leschetizky discussed his method for teaching. First, a student must learn correct hand position and the many different qualities of touch that produces an endless variety of tone. Firm fingers with a flexible wrist must also be developed. Further, rules of singing must be learned and applied for the correct interpretative playing of melodic passages, such as the correct placement of natural accents and extra attention to long notes so that they will sustain. In the interest of saving time and money, Leschetizky required his students to work with one of his assistants on those preparatory matters. Once the foundation was secure, Leschetizky tailored his teaching to the individual needs of each student without the use of one particular teaching method. He felt this was necessary in order to avoid imitative performers who produce a "dry, soulless art."¹⁸⁴

Leschetizky paid close attention to proper use of the pedal, a singing tone, and the most comfortable way of handling technical matters, such as scales, arpeggios, octaves, etc... Perhaps in the early days, there was a Leschetizky method. However, once Leschetizky turned over the

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 220.

¹⁸² Gardner, "Leschetizky and His School," 87.

¹⁸³ Woodhouse, "How Leschetizky Taught," 220.

¹⁸⁴ Hughes, "Theodore Leschetizky on Modern Pianoforte Study," 227-228.

technical training to his assistants, his teaching became more and more individualized.¹⁸⁵

According to Gardner, Leschetizky's six or seven assistants begin to teach differently, and therefore, Leschetizky claimed to have no method to avoid a dispute between the assistants as to which one actually taught his principles.¹⁸⁶

Woodhouse recalls that once he finished with his preparatory studies and exercises, Leschetizky never referred to technical drills again. If a technical issue surfaced in a piece, Leschetizky would provide a solution for the student. To Leschetizky, it was a common sense approach tailored to the individual needs of each student. Woodhouse surmised this was the secret to why Leschetizky never attempted to articulate his own particular teaching method.¹⁸⁷

In describing Leschetizky's teaching method, student Arthur Shattuck confirmed what others believed. Leschetizky demonstrated to his students how to produce the effects needed in each particular passage. Leschetizky looked for physical problems in his students and provided solutions. He thoroughly explained the art of developing a singing tone, and he worked with his students on producing tone at any dynamic level with clarity and beauty, even at pianissimo, which would always project to the back of the concert hall.¹⁸⁸ Paderewski also confirmed that any method by Leschetizky had to do specifically with tone. According to Paderewski, every student had to develop "breadth, softness of touch, and precision in rhythm," but then the rest was developed as to the individuality of the student."¹⁸⁹ For Paderewski, it was the "method of methods."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Gardner, "Leschetizky and His School," 88.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Woodhouse, "How Leschetizky Taught," 223-224.

¹⁸⁸ Schonberg, "The Lisztianers and Leschetizkianers Take Over, 295-296.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 296.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

A solid technical foundation was required of Leschetizky's students along with a thorough understanding of the playing mechanism. Leschetizky gave his assistants great freedom in training his beginning students. In general, assistants were to pay attention to the position of the hand and arm, the distance from the keyboard, and the student's attitude during the lesson.¹⁹¹ Assistants were to work on development of strength, independence, and evenness in fingers and development of tone and touch with flexibility of the wrist.¹⁹²

There are two important books authored by assistants that provide insight to this technical training: *The Groundwork of the Leschetizky Method, issued with his approval by his assistant Malwine Brée* published in 1902; and, Marie Prentner's *Fundamental Principles of the Leschetizky Method* published in 1903. These books contain descriptive material, illustrations of the hand, technical exercises, and excerpts from the classical repertoire.¹⁹³

Professor Reginald Gerig's comprehensive study of piano technique throughout history points out discrepancies in these texts with what others felt Leschetizky maintained relating to tone and arm weight. For example, Brée's book is filled with finger exercises wherein one is to hold down combinations of notes and exercise a certain finger using repeated notes. Although wrist flexibility is stressed, use of the larger playing units is neglected.¹⁹⁴ Although Gerig is correct concerning exercises relating to isolation of the fingers, there is something of importance to be noted concerning these exercises. The book advises students to start out playing the finger exercises with a light touch for a few days, then to work on getting more tone. Students should always be listening for evenness. They must learn to exert more force with the weaker fingers to accomplish that task. They must work slowly and deliberately using only the ear to determine

¹⁹¹ Jenkins, "Theodor Leschetizky," 504-506.

¹⁹² Brée, "Groundwork of the Leschetizky Method," 1-31.

¹⁹³ Brée's book contains forty-seven illustrations of hand positions using Leschetizky's hand as a model.

¹⁹⁴ Uszler, "Historical Overview," 295.

correct quality of sound. In order to keep the students from suffering any injury, they were to watch for fatigue in the hand. To help, students were to alternate hands, so when one hand felt heavy it could rest. Fingers were to remain in their curved position. It is apparent from the ordering of the information in the book, that wrist flexibility was an important part of the training.¹⁹⁵

Zeisler acknowledged that the books published on the Leschetizky standards by his assistants have merit, but by no means constitute a Leschetizky method. Zeisler recalls Leschetizky laughing when one spoke of his method.¹⁹⁶ In an interview published in the *Chicago Tribune* on December 25, 1901, Zeisler stated:

Blindfold me and put me in a room with Paderewski, Essipoff, or Slivinski at the piano, and I should recognize the tutelage of Leschetizky. The oft-quoted ‘Leschetizky method’ is bosh, but by a hundred little tricks and mannerisms I should recognize the work of one of his pupils in the dark. The man had a wonderful presence and power; I could play things when he was by that I could not have played an hour after he was gone. It is one’s knowledge of the man which causes a smile when his ‘methods’ are talked of.¹⁹⁷

In addition to the assistants’ books, writings of Hughes and Woodhouse confirm that Leschetizky had defined standards for his students. He wanted them to sit balanced with authority often stating, “Sit at the piano as you ride a horse.”¹⁹⁸ Leschetizky wanted his students to practice finger-strengthening exercises until their hand began to strain. Leschetizky compared this type of practicing to working with a racehorse to see how fast and far it can go without stopping.¹⁹⁹ Leschetizky used Czerny exercises almost exclusively with students, preferring those to etudes by Clementi, Cramer and others. He felt Czerny wrote in a more effortless,

¹⁹⁵ Brée, *Groundwork of the Leschetizky Method*, 4-5.

¹⁹⁶ Zeisler, “The Secret of Public Appearance,” 761.

¹⁹⁷ Sigmund Zeisler, “Biography,” un-paginated.

¹⁹⁸ Woodhouse, “How Leschetizky Taught,” 220.

¹⁹⁹ Hughes, “Theodore Leschetizky on Modern Pianoforte Study,” 227-228.

pianistic style with clarity and nuance than others who seem to put unnecessary obstacles in their etudes. He liked Clementi, at times, though, for endurance and speed.²⁰⁰

Assistant and Biographer Hullah surmises that any mention of a method by Leschetizky generally conveys to others the ideas of technical perfection since an elevated level of virtuosity is a common factor among Leschetizky's most famous students. The technical characteristics most noted in his students include, "emphasized rhythm, clearness, inaudible pedaling, brilliance in staccato passages."²⁰¹ These characteristics, however, are a small part of Leschetizky's training. Students must devote much of their time to the intellectual study of their music.²⁰² To her, Leschetizky's system involves development of the hand, mental study of compositions, and the effects to be produced at the piano.²⁰³ Leschetizky felt the hand, wrist, and arm must be completely controlled to the point that each part can function independently of each other. Specifically, it must be possible to stiffen one part while the others are totally relaxed, or to put one unit in motion while the others rest. Consideration must be given to finger strength, variety of touch, and flawless pedaling. Exercises were used to develop these technical traits, and then the process of learning how to manipulate the piano began.²⁰⁴ Compositions were selected to study melodic lines, touch, rhythm, and pedal effects, among other things. Hullah writes that Leschetizky put special emphasis on "development of strength and sensitiveness in the finger tips, clear distinction between the many varieties of touch, and the necessity of an immaculate pedaling."²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Hullah, *Theodor Leschetizky*, 39-40.

²⁰² Ibid., 40.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 42-44.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 42.

From the first piece studied, Leschetizky taught the student how to work efficiently on the piece. The student studied and memorized one small passage at a time determining appropriate technique, touch, and nuance. The student learned to dissect each passage until every marking was perfectly clear. The student was to make the passage as perfect as possible before adding another small passage. To Leschetizky, this was the most efficient manner of learning music that keeps it etched securely in the memory.²⁰⁶

Leschetizky believed students, especially American students, practiced too much, wasting much time mindlessly playing passages over and over. Students did not spend enough time pondering and mentally constructing how they want a passage to be played. When he learned a new piece, he would put the music away from the piano rack so that he would have to constantly get up to look at the notes. After mentally memorizing a particular passage, he would sit down to attempt to play it with correct notes, rhythm, touch, pedaling, etc. He would stand up to look at the music and study the passage again if it did not go well the first time or there was a memory lapse. He called this process “intelligent piano study.”²⁰⁷ Interestingly, Leschetizky told a student at a lesson in the artist class to “study like Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler, who, when she has something … to learn, extracts everything from it; she presses everything out of it – like juice from a lemon. She misses nothing.”²⁰⁸

Leschetizky believed it was best to practice in the morning beginning with a few technical exercises. After that, students were advised to alternate technical training with repertoire so that the mind remains engaged, which it will not do when one works constantly at

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 42-44.

²⁰⁷ Hughes, “Theodore Leschetizky on Modern Pianoforte Study,” 227-228.

²⁰⁸ Newcomb, *Leschetizky as I Knew Him*, 37-38.

something for a long period of time.²⁰⁹ He insisted that students spend time going to the opera, theatre, symphony, and art galleries.²¹⁰

Leschetizky felt it was important to assign repertoire appropriate to the maturity level of each student. Otherwise, the student would become an imitator without any individuality, which he detested. Occasionally, he assigned pieces that worked on the same problem areas, but he preferred to give pieces with different challenges and difficulties so that the mind would stay continually focused and engaged. According to Hullah, this “concentrated thought” was a tenant of his teaching standards, apart from which nothing would be perpetually processed or retained.²¹¹

For a successful performance, Leschetizky taught his students to have tone and diction with nuance from the fingers and to play from the heart. For Leschetizky, a pianist can only hold an audience’s attention if he tells a story through the performance. One must always be searching for new and unexpected effects. He taught his students to learn the difference in strength and breadth of effect when playing in a large space such as a concert hall as opposed to a salon environment.²¹²

Leschetizky felt recitals had become too long with little imagination in programming. He wished performers would play more contemporary music, especially works of living composers, but realized performers were afraid of the critics. He observed that even Paderewski would play his own compositions only occasionally for fear of the critics.²¹³

Notwithstanding the process employed by Leschetizky’s assistants and any specific process used by Leschetizky in working with his students, one can be certain Leschetizky’s

²⁰⁹ Hughes, “Theodore Leschetizky on Modern Pianoforte Study,” 227-228.

²¹⁰ Woodhouse, “How Leschetizky Taught,” 222.

²¹¹ Hullah, *Theodor Leschetizky*, 47-50.

²¹² Hughes, “Theodore Leschetizky on Modern Pianoforte Study,” 227-228.

²¹³ Ibid.

emphasis on tone, as well as his ideas on interpretation and individuality, set him apart as one of the foremost piano pedagogues of his time. For him, strict technical training was a vehicle for expression of the art. Although Leschetizky preferred no particular method for his students, he adhered to a few basic tenants in his teaching, some of which are summarized as follows:

1. The position of the hand and arm must be relaxed and free;
2. The arm should be level with the keys, or slightly lower when the fingers rested on the keyboard;
3. The knuckles should be raised;
4. Students should not sway with their bodies or move their head;
5. Eyes should be focused on the keyboard to avoid any external distractions and to allow for maximum concentrated effort;
6. Students should attain perfect muscular control ranging from any extreme stiffness to complete relaxation by practicing slowly with focused thought;
7. Students should spend the majority of their practice time with mental study and practice;
8. Students should not practice for long periods without a break;
9. Students should not practice more than four hours per day;
10. Students should strive to play all the notes perfect and be able to play any passage no matter how difficult;
11. Students should never perform a piece in public until they have studied it for a least one year, perhaps even longer;
12. Every passage should be clear to the audience, even in a practice room before an imaginary audience;
13. Students' ultimate goal is to become individual interpreters of their art; they must exhibit intellect and charm in their performances.²¹⁴

Zeisler explained in the 1905 interview with William Armstrong for *The Etude* that the reason Leschetizky had so many pupils with a different manner of playing is that he treated them all as individuals. The only method that Leschetizky or any other great teacher had was a method for technical advancement. Unique to Leschetizky was the development of temperament and personality in each student's interpretation of the music.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Jenkins, "Theodore Leschetizky," 504.

²¹⁵ Armstrong, "Zeisler on Study and Repertoire," 51-52.

Continuation of Leschetizky's Legacy

There are rather obvious common tendencies in both Leschetizky's and Zeisler's teaching standards and preferences. As the first American student to study with Leschetizky, there is little doubt that she is an important figure in transmitting his ideas to the United States.

Leschetizky and Zeisler wished to accept only talented students who intended to pursue music as a profession. Each expected the students to make diligent, intelligent, independent, and committed efforts to perfecting their art. Both carefully observed their students, and they worked in a unique manner to solve the individual challenges in their students' physical and artistic capabilities. A deep level of concern and compassion for the student balanced harsh mannerisms and seemingly unreasonable expectations. Their focus centered on exquisite tone and touch, which came from explorations of how the fingers, hand, and wrist worked together, and possibly the arm. They insisted on score study and slow, meticulous practice. Leschetizky seemed to have more boundaries on over-practicing than Zeisler, but they both believed in limitations relative to how long the mind could stay focused on the task. They both encouraged their students to consistently explore all the other art forms.

Zeisler's artist class, which was formatted in the way she had studied with Leschetizky, was something entirely different than what most teachers were doing at that time with respect to group lessons or class piano. Those teachers generally grouped students of approximately equal levels into a class wherein they studied the same pieces. This was not Zeisler's philosophy, and this was not the way she was taught. Even though her students were participating in a class environment, they were still receiving private and tailored instruction. Students played different compositions ranging from a level such as a Clementi sonata to a Liszt concerto. Not only did students benefit from observing other students' lessons, but they also became motivated to work

harder because each one wanted to perform better than the others. From Zeisler's experience, students progressed much faster under this method.²¹⁶

Like Leschetizky, Zeisler did not believe in pinning one's faith to a method. During the years she studied with Leschetizky, he made it very clear that he had no fixed method for teaching students. It could be said that he had a different method for each student as he studied their needs and taught to their individuality. Even his demeanor was different with different students. He was sarcastic to some; to others, he was harsh. Without any particular method, Leschetizky's "interesting personality and his great qualities as an artist" were prevalent.²¹⁷ To Zeisler, Leschetizky was an endless source of inspiration. He gave practical illustrations on the piano showing a student how to play particular passages. He told stories to illuminate his ideas. His desire was to find the best in every student.²¹⁸ Zeisler's students describe her in the same way.

Leschetizky and Zeisler wanted each student to go through preparatory exercises, some with slight variations. Curiously, Zeisler believed it was not the exercises themselves that were so important but rather the persistence in which one had to suffer through them.²¹⁹ They both employed the use of assistants in training beginning or new students. In studying *The Groundwork of the Leschetizky Method, issued with his approval by his assistant Malwine Brée*, one can find direct similarities in the way Zeisler taught finger exercises, scales, arpeggios, and chords. The idea of holding a group of notes while others play is common to both. Both felt finger independence, strength, and evenness was paramount to piano playing. Both wanted firm fingers with a loose wrist.

²¹⁶ Zeisler, "Madame Bloomfield's Opinions," 9.

²¹⁷ Zeisler, "The Secret of Public Appearance," 761.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

Additionally, both had a preference for teaching certain works due to the educational value for the student, and they were firm in convictions relating to the stylistic and interpretative components of those works. Listening to one's own playing from all aspects of learning to the performance was an essential element to their philosophy.

Like Leschetizky, Zeisler believed success comes from only those things that produced a mature and authentic artist.²²⁰ Leschetizky discovered a student's weak points, such as fingering, phrasing, pedaling, chords, scales, octaves, or passagework, and personalized his teaching towards those things. Exercises were selected from Czerny, Loeschhorn, Kohler, or others, or might have been taken from his own collection of etudes. To Zeisler, this was the only consistent way of instructing, and she adhered to it in all of her studio work.²²¹

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Wilson, "With a Study of her Hands," 11.

CONCLUSION

Zeisler passed on standards that she learned from Leschetizky to her students. She was a continued source of inspiration to them through her brilliant playing and through her teaching with charm, wit, discipline, colorful stories, and illustrations. Like her master teacher, Zeisler did not believe in a fixed method. She found there was good in some methods and bad in others.²²² Therefore, she developed the technical process, and then she taught to the individuality of her students. Like Leschetizky, she adhered to simple principles: technique, individuality, and art.

Because of her unyielding devotion to her music, Zeisler became a cultural ambassador in Chicago helping to elevate the music scene there. Her informal concerts and receptions held on the last Wednesday evening of every month were historic in Chicago's cultural life. A 1927 editorial for a special edition of *Music Magazine* devoted to Zeisler after her death gives a fascinating picture of the early music scene in Chicago. The writer reminisces about the days when the first significant concerts were given in an old building on the lakefront near the railroad. It was built without thought to acoustics or proper placement of seats so that the audience would benefit the most from the performance. Noise from locomotives frequently interrupted performances. In his opinion, only a rare pianist could fill that hall for a recital. The writer acknowledged that Zeisler's career epitomized the development of music, not only in Chicago but also throughout the Mid-West.²²³

²²² Zeisler, "The Secret of Public Appearance," 761-762.

²²³ *Music Magazine*, "An Individual Life and an Epoch," 5.

Zeisler did much to promote music study in the United States. She wrote numerous articles and gave many interviews. In the March 1890 edition of *Philadelphia Musical Journal*, Zeisler discussed the advantages of foreign study over that offered in the United States. In Europe, Zeisler wrote, students were expected to attend the opera, orchestral and chamber performances, solo recitals, and any other performance or entertainment of a musical nature. It was harder to require students to do that in the United States, especially in places like New York where such performances were so expensive. Conversely, small cities did not have many musical concerts to offer students. Moreover, Zeisler felt that many Americans were not open to spending their time at these concerts and performances, even though she suspected with time there would be musical growth in American everyday life. To her, students need other avenues to influence their art, such as art galleries and venues for highly intelligent thought. In Europe, she had the benefit of hearing all the greatest artists in one season. There, students woke up and practiced, then had a lesson, talked music with their colleagues, practiced more, had a harmony or theory lesson, walked and talked with musical people, read music, and then went to evening concerts.²²⁴ She believed American music study could develop in a similar fashion and encouraged others to help promote such opportunities.

In 1912, Zeisler wrote an article for *Musical America* admonishing the American public for driving its students to Europe for study and for demanding foreign talent of managers, music clubs, and orchestras. She urged managers and heads of the music organizations to educate the public on the worth of American talent by repeatedly giving performance opportunities to American artists and composers. She also pleaded for the press to convince the public that American artists and composers have proven to be equal to that of foreign talent.²²⁵ Through the

²²⁴ Zeisler, "Madame Bloomfield's Opinions," 9.

²²⁵ Zeisler, "Public to Blame," 3-4.

years, Zeisler became frustrated with European talent receiving opportunities over rising American artists, especially over her own students.

Zeisler helped change attitudes regarding separation of men and women. Her technical and artistic capabilities broke through the barrier of discriminatory thought that men were greater artists than women, giving her a unique voice to advocate for equality in the profession. In actuality, she was not a progressive feminist. She just wanted women to be recognized for their distinctive contributions to music. In July 1890, Zeisler gave a speech to the Music Teachers National Association, "Woman in Music," wherein she attempted to explain why women had not yet become significant composers. Zeisler opined that there were two branches of art, reproductive and creative. To her, little needed to be stated about women's roles in the reproductive branch of art since women had become quite successful in the field of performance. In fact, women had become unique in that branch because they were more subjective interpreters of art, as opposed to men who were mainly objective interpreters. The creative branch, though, was an area with little development by women. Zeisler noted that with the American Revolution and the liberal spirit of modern times, the position of women in public and social life had started to change with women becoming more uniquely involved in the areas of painting and literature. Yet, female composers were not emerging in that same manner. In summary, Zeisler believed that because of lack of opportunity for women, such as receiving the finest educational opportunities, their creative abilities were still very much limited. This progressive speech advocated for the time when women composers would enjoy a compositional domain unique to women, one that moves beyond any possibility of equality with men. She stated:

What we need now is not to imitate man, and try to become great in a field in which he has achieved success, but to develop those qualities which specifically belong to woman; then, and *only* will we be the true equal of man; in different spheres, in different directions to be sure, but equal in the degree of greatness in those spheres to which they cannot follow us. May it then be said: She came, was heard, and conquered.²²⁶

By performing works of her contemporaries, such as Amy Beach and Cecile Chaminade who dedicated pieces to her,²²⁷ and continuing to write about modern music in articles, Zeisler did much to promote the advancement of women composers.²²⁸

Although women had to compete for status as teachers, performers, and composers in music in the late nineteenth century, they often gained access to musical endeavors through the club movement. These clubs offered middle and upper class women educational and social opportunities. Women became important participants and patrons in their individual communities.²²⁹ Clubs helped promote the advancement of women as educators, performers, composers, and conductors.²³⁰ In June 1897, the Chicago Woman's Club elected Zeisler as an honorary member, a distinction that had been given to very few women.²³¹ At one time, she was also a member of the following: Chicago Amateur; the North Side Art Club; the Woman's Aid Club of Chicago; the Peoria Woman's Club of Peoria, Illinois; the Sacramento Saturday Club of Sacramento, California; and, the Philomel Piano Club of Warren, Pennsylvania.²³²

From working with Zeisler, Carol Robinson concluded that Zeisler became one of the most famous American pianists because of "lofty idealism, unremitting industry, indomitable

²²⁶ Zeisler, "Women in Music," 1-3. Zeisler appeared several times as a participant at the Music Teachers National Association annual meetings. After her death, she was appointed as a life member.

²²⁷ Examples of works dedicated to Zeisler include Amy Beach's Ballade in D-Flat Major, Op. 6, composed in 1894 and Cecile Chaminade's *Le Retour*, Op. 134, published in 1909.

²²⁸ Macleod, *Women Performing Music*, 92.

²²⁹ Allen, "Women's Contributions," 420.

²³⁰ Ibid., 422.

²³¹ Sigmund Zeisler, "Biography," un-paginated.

²³² *The National Cyclopedia*, "Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler," 192-193.

energy, and absolute sincerity.”²³³ Robinson felt, however, that Zeisler considered teaching as the greatest of the arts. Robinson acknowledged it was not easy studying with Zeisler, and many could not handle Zeisler’s frank criticism. For others, Zeisler built confidence and excitement for teaching. Robinson recalls with great fondness the support she received from Zeisler when she announced her desire to become a piano teacher.²³⁴ She also recalls the support Zeisler provided for Robinson’s debut with the Chicago Symphony. Zeisler accompanied Robinson to the first rehearsal and just before it was time to play, Zeisler handed to Robinson a mother-of-pearl dove memento Leschetizky had given to her before her first rehearsal with the Vienna Philharmonic. She wanted Robinson to wear it for the rehearsal and the performance to bring good luck.²³⁵

Zeisler was an authentic artist, and she used her platform as one of the world’s greatest pianists to share her art with the public and to infuse her ideas in the next generation of pianists. Even though not specifically found in the writings reviewed for this study, Zeisler must have known the historical relevance of her philosophies and ideas. Her teaching genealogy is rooted in Beethoven, who taught Czerny, who taught Leschetizky.

Zeisler’s last public performance was with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra on February 25, 1925 in a special concert to celebrate her fifty years as a performing artist. The proceeds from this concert were given to the United Charities of Chicago to be used for the relief of incapacitated musicians, a fund she established. The program included Beethoven’s Andante in F Major, Woo 57, which she played at her debut concert with the Beethoven Society when she was eleven years old. In addition to the Beethoven, Zeisler played the Schumann Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54 and the Chopin Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Minor, Op. 21. As an

²³³ Goss, *Music and the Moderns*, 7.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid., 8.

encore, she played the Scherzo from the Litolff Concerto Symphonique No. 4 in D Minor, Op. 102. As usual, the reviews were glowing. One critic said she played “with all the vigor, authority, superlative technic and spiritual beauty that have characterized her art at any time during her long and honorable career. Not one of her great powers has waned. No adornment of her art has lost its luster.”²³⁶ That same critic called her interpretation of the Chopin concerto the greatest he had ever heard.²³⁷ What a remarkable tribute for a woman who spent her life devoted to her art. The fiftieth anniversary was also celebrated at a luncheon of the Arts Club of Chicago on February 26th; a dinner of The Cordon on March 11th; a luncheon of the Chicago Woman’s on March 16th; a luncheon of The Piano Club of Chicago on March 2nd; a meeting of the Book and Play Club held March 26th; and, a dinner at the Beethoven Association in New York on April 13th. Zeisler was elected an honorary member of the Piano Club, of the Society of American Musicians, and of The Cordon.²³⁸

Zeisler left a legacy of sincerity, value of the individual, unrelenting discipline, and an overwhelming passion for music. Perhaps words from Robert Stevens’ speech given at the Golden Jubilee Celebration is the most appropriate conclusion for this study on such an extraordinary pedagogue:

Ah, if you could only know what Mrs. Zeisler has meant to us as a class, as students, as pupils, as struggling artists, what deep interest she has always taken in our welfare, what thought she has always given to all our problems, you would know what human kindness is. I can only speak of her and think of her, as all her class, I am sure, would express their sentiments, as the Little Mother and I think of her also as one of the great mothers of all struggling musicians.²³⁹

²³⁶ Allais, Paul. “The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Golden Jubilee Celebration,” 5-6.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid., 60-61.

²³⁹ The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club, *An Appreciation*, un-paginated.

Zeisler suffered a debilitating heart illness in 1926. She died the following summer at her home at the age of sixty-four.²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ Sigmund Zeisler, “Biography,” un-paginated.

REFERENCES

- Allais, Paul. *The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Golden Jubilee Celebration Booklet*, 1927. Box 2, Folder 34c, *Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler and Sigmund Zeisler Papers*, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.
- Allen, Doris. "Women's Contributions to Modern Piano Pedagogy." Edited by Judith Lang Zaimont. *The Musical Woman: An International Perspective* 2 (1987): 411-444.
- Ammer, Christine. *Unsung: a History of Women in American Music*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Armstrong, William. "Mrs. Bloomfield Zeisler on Study and Repertory." *The Etude*, 23, no. 2 (February 1905): 51-52.
- Block, Adrienne Fried, assisted by Nancy Stewart. "Women in American Music, 1800-1918." in *Women in Music*, edited by Karin Pendle, 142-172. Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1991.
- Bolland, David. "What They Taught: A Survey of Major Trends and Key Figures in the Development of Piano Technique and Style, Part Four – the Man Without a Method." *Australian Journal of Music Education*, no. 10 (1972): 11-16.
- Brée, Malwine. *The Groundwork of the Leschetizky Method*. Nabu Public Domain Reprints, 2010. First published 1902 by Haskell House Publishers Ltd.
- Brower, Harriette. "Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler: The Scope of Piano Technic." in *The Classic Works of Harriette Brower*. Editora Griffó, 2014: 209-217. Originally published as "Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler: The Scope of Piano Technic." In *Piano Mastery – Talks with Master Pianists and Teachers*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1915: 180-197.
- Burns, Debra Brubaker, Anita Jackson and Connie Arrau Sturm. "Unsung Heroines: Contributions of Selected Early Twentieth-Century Women to American Piano Pedagogy." *American Music Teacher* (December/January 2002/2003): 26.
- Cole, Rossetter. "Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler." *Studies in Musical Education, History and Aesthetics: MTNA Proceedings* XII (1927), 76-83.

Cornett-Murtada, Vanessa. "A Short History of Piano Pedagogy in the United States." Chap. 44 in *Creative Piano Teaching*, edited by James Lyke, Geoffrey Haydon, and Catherine Rollin, 567-571. Champaign: Stopes Publishing L.L.C., 2011.

DePauw University. "Duplexes Named in Honor of Distinctive Individuals from DePauw's Past." (August 29, 2003). <http://www.depauw.edu/news-media/latest-news/details/12880> (accessed January 15, 2016).

F.B. "Madness in Methods: A Symposium on Piano Playing." *The Philharmonic* 2, no. 2 (April 1902): 75-76.

Fisher, Christopher. "Group Piano Teaching: An Introduction." in *Teaching Piano in Groups*, 3-16. New York: Oxford University Press: 2010.

Gardner, Roy R. "Leschetizky and His School." *The Musical World* 1: no. 7 (August 1901): 87-90.

Gerig, Reginald R. *Famous Pianists and their Technique*. New ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007. First published 1974 by Robert B. Luce, Inc.

Goss, Glenda Dawn. *Music and the Moderns: The Life and Works of Carol Robinson*. New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993.

Hale, Phillip. "Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler," *Boston Journal* (March 13, 1893). *Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler and Sigmund Zeisler Papers*. The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. Also found in MF 3315. *Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Papers*. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Hallman, Diana Ruth. "Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler in American Music and Society." Master's Thesis, University of Maryland, 1983.

Hedley, Arthur. "Liszt the Pianist and Teacher." in *Franz Liszt: The Man and his Music*, edited by Alan Walker, 22-35. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1970.

Hixon, Don L., and Don A. Hennessee. *Women in Music*. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993.

Hughes, Edwin. "Theodore Leschetizky on Modern Pianoforte Study." *The Etude*, 27, no. 4 (April 1909): 227-228.

Hullah, Annette. *Theodor Leschetizky*. London: John Lane, 1906.

Huneker, James. "Was Leschetizky a Greater Teacher than Liszt?" *The New York Times Magazine* (November 28, 1915): 11-12.

Jenkins, Constance. "Theodor Leschetizky 1830-1915." *The Musical Times* 71, no. 1048 (June 1930): 504-506.

Jonás, Alberto. *Master School of Virtuoso Piano Playing*. 7 vols. New York: Carl Fischer, 1922. Reprinted with a new foreword by Reah Sadowsky and a new introduction by Sara Davis Buechner. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2011.

Lahee, Henry C. *Famous Pianists of Today and Yesterday*. Boston: L.C. Page & Company, 2010. First published 1900 by Colonial Press.

Macleod, Beth Abelson. *Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler: The Life and Times of a Piano Virtuoso*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

_____. "Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?" Gender and Instrumental Musicians in America, 1853-1990. *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 291-308.

_____. *Women Performing Music: The Emergence of American Women as Classical Instrumentalists and Conductors*. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001.

Mathews, W.S.B. "A Great Pianist at Home." *Music* IX (November 1895): 1-10.

McCarthy, S. Margaret William, ed. *More Letters of Amy Fay: The American Years, 1879-1916*. Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1986.

Music Magazine. "An Individual Life and an Epoch." October 1927: 5.

_____. "Six Distinguished Chicago Concert Pianists." October 1927:15.

Musical America. "Passing of the World's Most Famous Piano Teacher." November 1915: 3-4.

Newcomb, Ethel. *Leschetizky as I Knew Him*. Charleston: Bibliolife, 2015. First published 1921 by D. Appleton and Company.

Pirani, Eugenio Di. "From Liszt to Leschetizky." *The Etude*. November 1920: 727-728.

Prentner, Marie. *Leschetizky's Fundamental Principles of Piano Technique*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005. First published 1903 by Theodore Presser under the title *Fundamental Principles of the Leschetizky Method* as part of *The Modern Pianist* series, translated from the German by M. de Kendler and A. Maddock.

Schonberg, Harold. "The Ladies." Chap. 25 in *The Great Pianists*, 347-357. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1987.

_____. "The Lisztianers and Leschetizkianers Take Over." Chap. 20 in *The Great Pianists*, 291-300. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1987.

- Sturm, Connie Arrau, Michael James, Anita Jackson, and Debra Brubaker Burns. “Celebrating 100 Years of Progress in American Piano Teaching, Part I: 1900-1950.” *American Music Teacher* 50, no. 2 (October/November 2000): _____.
The Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Club. *Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler: An Appreciation*. Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler and Sigmund Zeisler Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois (1927).
The National Cyclopedie of American Biography. 1917. “Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler:” 193.
Tick, Judith. “Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life, 1870-1900.” in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, edited by Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, 325-348. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
Tracey, Dr. James M. “Some of the World’s Greatest Women Pianists.” *The Etude* 25, no. 12 (December 1907): 773-774.
Troendle, Theodora. “How Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Taught.” *The Etude* (November 1929): 799-800.
Uszler, Marienne, Stewart Gordon, and Elyse Mach. “Historical Overview of Keyboard Pedagogy” Part Seven in *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher*, 267-337. New York: Schirmer Books, 1991.
Weber, Grant. “Mme. Bloomfield-Zeisler’s Artist Class.” *Music: A Monthly Magazine Devoted to the Art, Science, Technic and Literature of Music* 10 (May-October 1896): 488-494.
Wilson, G. Mark. “Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler: With a Study of Her Hands.” *The Musician* XIX, no. 1 (January 1914): 11-12.
Woodhouse, George. “How Leschetizky Taught.” *Music & Letters* 35, no. 3 (July 1954): 220-226.
Zeisler, Fannie Bloomfield. “Appearing in Public.” In *Great Pianists on Piano Playing*, edited by James Francis Cooke, 55-68. Reprinted Kentucky, 2015. First published 1917 by Theodore Presser Company.
_____. “How I Play Schumann’s Nachtstücke.” *The Delineator* 80 (October 1912): 292-293.
_____. “Mme. Bloomfield’s Opinions.” *Philadelphia Musical Journal* (March 1890): 9.
_____. “Public to Blame for Blind Worship of European Fetish.” *Musical America* (October 1914): 3-4.
_____. “Ten Practice Rules.” *The Etude* (April 1909): 237.

_____. "The Secret of Public Appearance." *The Etude*, 26 No. 12 (December 1908): 761-763.

_____. "Woman in Music." *American Art Journal* 58, no. 1 (October 1891): 1-3. Previously published in the *Official Report of the Music Teachers' National Association, Fourteenth Annual Meeting* (July 1890): 38-44 and *The Musical World*, 70, no. 33 (August 1890): 654-655.

Zeisler, Sigmund. Unpublished biography of Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler, undated. Box 3, Folders 46-53. *Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler and Sigmund Zeisler Papers*, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. Also found in Box 1, Folders 23-26. MS-587. *Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler Papers*. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

APPENDIX A: PHOTOGRAPHS OF ZEISLER'S ARTIST CLASS

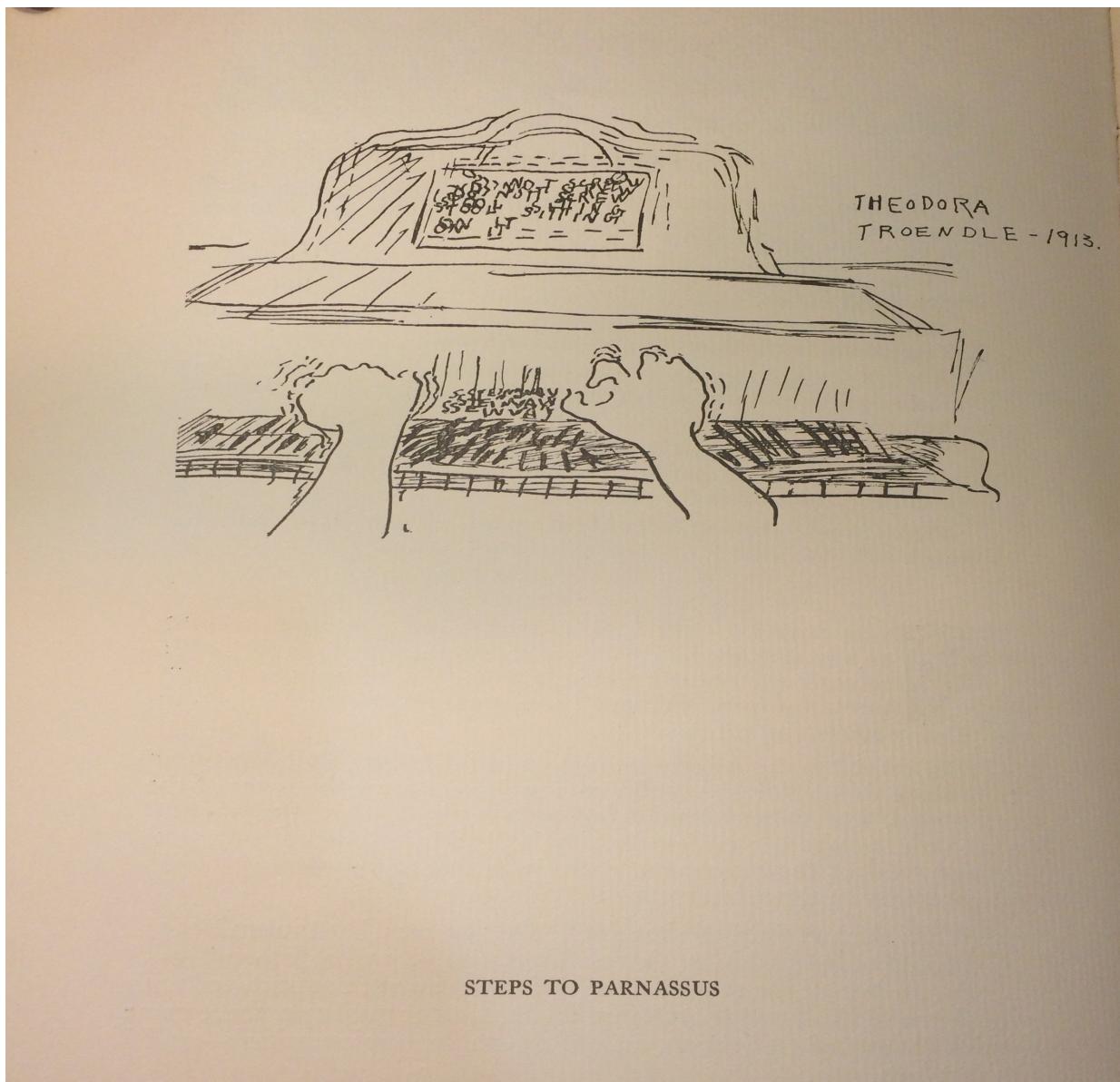


Photograph courtesy of The Newberry Library

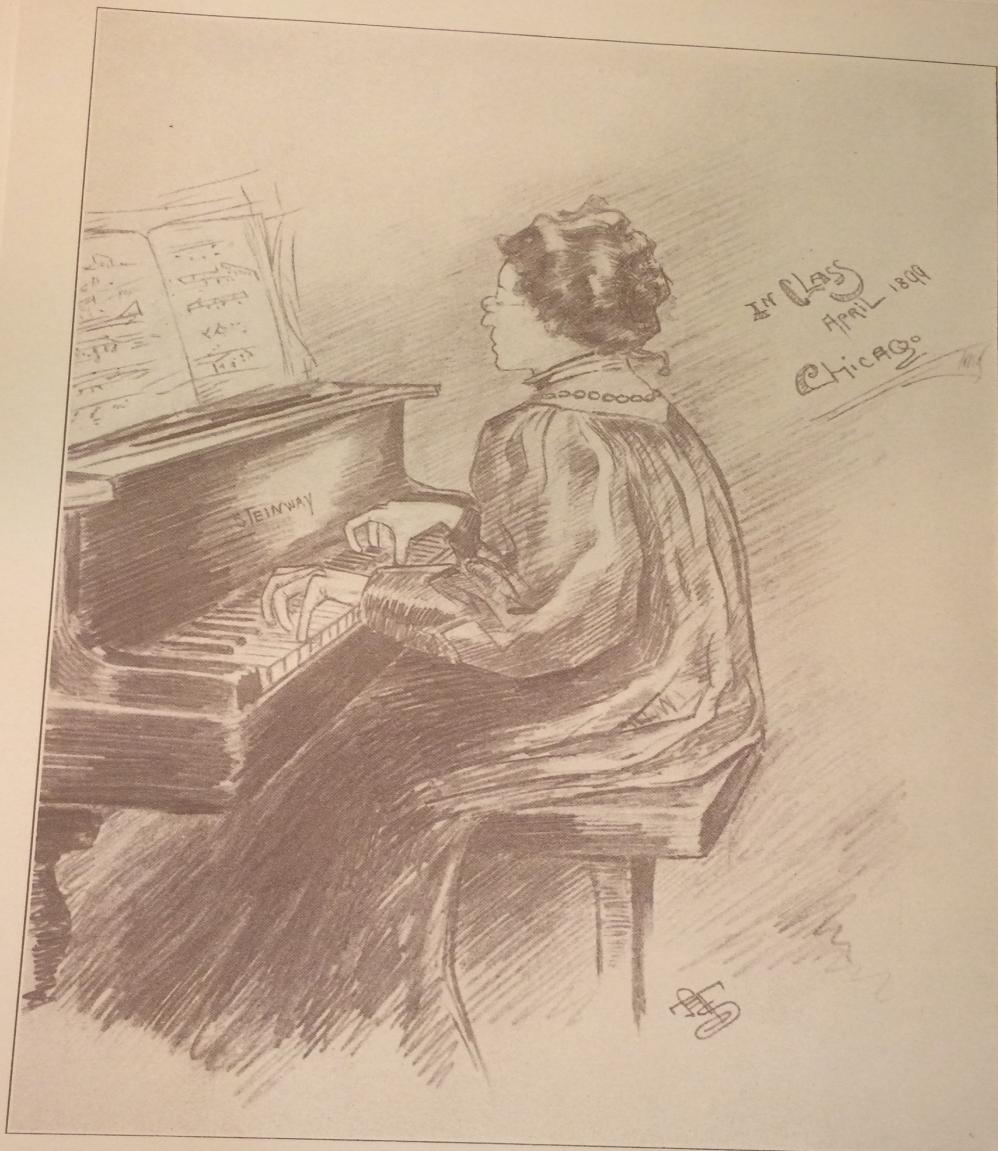


Photograph courtesy of The Newberry Library

APPENDIX B: SKETCHES FROM THE ARTIST CLASS



Photograph courtesy of The Newberry Library



DRAWING BY COURTESY OF ARTHUR SHATTUCK
PLATE BY COURTESY OF CLARENCE SHEPHARD,
OSHKOSH, WIS.

Photograph courtesy of The Newberry Library

APPENDIX C: ZEISLER'S MAXIMS

ZEISLER MAXIMS

(Gleaned at random from a student's note book)

"If you cannot play beyond the printed page, you cannot play the piano."

"Hit the piano and it will hit back."

"Music is to be heard and not seen."

"Poor pianists can play notes but it takes an artist to play rests."

"Technique is merely a means to an end."

"The arm grows out of the shoulder, not out of the chest. Let it hang freely."

"Just a simple ritardando is a great thing to practice in itself."

"Remember, an edition is merely the thoughts of one man."

"Practice is to habituate oneself to correct playing."

"Never take pedal on a diatonic progression in the lowest voice."

"The ear is the highest authority in pedaling."

"Taking the pedal up badly is worse than putting it down badly."

"There are no rules for melody playing."

"Quantity takes care of itself if Quality is all right. This applies to many things; speed, power, etc."

"Violent changes of tempo are seldom in good taste."

"Never play so fast that you take the beauties out of a piece."

"Liberties we take with tempo, etc., in modern composers, we cannot take with the classical masters."

"Try to copy from the performance of artists, the things which you can do, but not the eccentricities and exaggerations."

"We have in music words, phrases, sentences and everything there is in poetry or artistic speaking. A parallel for everything in music could easily be found in literature and speech."

"Never play a part of a piece faster than you can play the whole of it."

"You will like Bach if you study it as voices singing along together. You will not like it if you study it as a chunk of notes."

"Among the many things Bach teaches are a good thinking mind, independence of fingers, carrying of voices, different touches, phrasing, etc."

"Schumann takes a great deal of intellectual appreciation. Scarcely any of Schumann's music is easy."

"A characteristic of Beethoven is the FF followed suddenly by PP and vice versa."

Photograph courtesy of The Newberry Library

"A characteristic of Chopin is a big climax at the very end of a piece; a thing in keeping with his nature and feeling."

"Mozart's music is very exacting. It demands greater artistry than almost anything else. It must be always transparent, delicate, lacy, elegant, fine, child-like and often prim and minuet-like, just like the dress and customs of his age."

"Moszkowski writes very idiomatically for the piano."

"What Scriabine didn't know about pedaling wasn't worth knowing."

PAUL ALLAIS, *Chicago*.



Photograph courtesy of The Newberry Library

ZEISLERIANA

"The things you people do by intuition!"

"Keep away from that sentimentality; it is very unbecoming, especially in a person of your sex. You are liable to be suspected of all sorts of things."

"You played like a sick chicken."

Upon a pupil's complaint that his hands were cold,—"Is it the fourth finger only, that is cold?"

"Rules are developed from much experience and practice; they are not made."

"I must teach you not pieces but piano playing."

"You never will be a pianist or anything else, if you don't worry."

"Take your tempos, don't let them take you."

"Talent will carry you a long way,—a night-walking condition; but sometime you will wake up and it is gone."

"Oh no, I am not always consistent, I don't want to be."

"Instead of being childlike it is childish."

"Please change your pedal occasionally!"

"I did say the final judgment was the ear—but *my* ear, not yours."

"Some pianists make you think, 'My God, what a technique!'; and others are able to do everything necessary, but you do not notice it. And after all, the player piano can do it better than anyone!"

"If this were so easy, it wouldn't be worth doing. You don't particularly care to sew on buttons."

"When you feel as if you would like to jump through the roof, your audience feels that way, too."

"If you can't play Bach, you can't play the piano."

Photograph courtesy of The Newberry Library

"The Lord did not make us primarily to play the piano, or He would not have made our fourth fingers."

"You play as if you were walking on eggshells."

"In the beginning there was rhythm."

"When you practice—nothing is too small to make you stop;

When you play—nothing is great enough to stop you."

"Practicing fast?—there is no such thing."

"I have read some remarkable things by people I never heard of,— and they do more good for the world than lots of these big artists. The wise person learns something every day,—by asking *any one*. Even the lowliest may give you something."

"Don't be like the card players, always having post-mortems. Never mind what you should have played."

The requirements of a great pianist: Beautiful touch
Variety of touch
Gradations of touch
Rhythm
Temperament
Adequate technique.

Photograph courtesy of The Newberry Library

1. Pupil (making many mistakes): "I could play that perfectly at home." Mrs. Zeisler: "What a nice place home must be."
2. The most dreaded and embarrassing of all questions—"How did you practice?"
3. "Be careful readers and students. Go through your pieces with a fine-tooth comb for all accidentals."
4. "For shading, think of all the different colors—green, for instance. For shade and contrast we have all nature—outdoors."
5. Mrs. Zeisler: "Get the Paradies Sonata." Pupil (timidly): "Who wrote the Paradise Sonata?" Mrs. Zeisler (under her breath): "My God!"
6. "All technical exercises are good if done in the right way."
7. "Start a library of classics—become familiar with all."
8. Class days were full of surprises as discussions might turn to a wide range of subjects—psychology, mathematics, history, biography, literature, art, etc., etc.
9. "There are so many good players nowadays that unless one plays musically interestingly there is no place for you."
10. "Count aloud—staccato. How much the voice can aid in getting an effect."
11. "In Bach we do not use much pedal because we listen for the voices."
12. "I can take the conceit and high-mindedness air out of a pupil quicker than I can remove carelessness."
13. Mrs. Zeisler (about to explain a good ritardando to a pupil): "Do you remember anything about arithmetical progression?" Pupil: "#%:@#\\$?xz."

ETHEL KELLEY, Kansas City.

Photograph courtesy of The Newberry Library

APPENDIX D: ZEISLER'S FINGER EXERCISES
FROM *MASTER SCHOOL OF VIRTUOSO PIANO PLAYING*, VOLUME 1

161

Original exercis -
es, expressly written
for this work, by

Originalübungen,
eigens für dieses Werk
geschrieben, von

Exercices originaux,
écrits expressément
pour cette œuvre, par

Ejercicios originales
escritos especialmente
para esta obra, por

FANNIE BLOOMFIELD-ZEISLER

The aim of these ex-
ercises is to promote in-
dependence, strength and
evenness of fingers while
gently stretching the li-
gaments between the fin-
gers. (A.J.)

Diese Übungen bezweck-
ken die Entwicklung von
Unabhängigkeit, Kraft und
Ebenmässigkeit in den
Fingern, indem die Li-
gamente zwischen den
Fingern in sanfter Weise
gestreckt werden. (A.J.)

Le but de ces exer-
cices est de donner aux
doigts l'indépendance, la
force et l'égalité. tout
en étirant doucement les
ligaments inter-digitaux.
(A.J.)

El objeto de estos ejer-
cicios es dar a los dedos
independencia, fuerza e
igualdad y al mismo tiem-
po estirar suavemente los
ligamentos interdigitales.
(A.J.)

The sheet music consists of six staves of piano music. The first staff is in common time, G major, with a dynamic marking 'm.d.'. It features fingerings above the notes: 3 2 1 2 4 2 1 2 3 1 2 1 2. The second staff is also in common time, G major, with fingerings: 3 2 1 2 4 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3. The third staff is in common time, G major, with fingerings: 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4. The fourth staff is in common time, G major, with fingerings: 3 2 1 2 4 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3. The fifth staff is in common time, G major, with fingerings: 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4. The sixth staff is in common time, G major, with fingerings: 3 2 1 2 4 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3. Each staff concludes with the word 'simile'.

© 2011, Dover Publications, Inc.
Used by permission.

3 2 3 2 3 2
1 4 3 4 3 4 3
2 2 2 2 2 2
5 4 5 4 5 4 5 4
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

simile

simile

etc.

m.s.

3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4
1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
2 3 4 3 2 3 4 3 2 3 4
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4
1 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 3
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
2 3 4 3 2 3 4 3 2 3 4
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4
1 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 3
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4
1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
2 3 4 3 2 3 4 3 2 3 4
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4
1 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 3
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
2 3 4 3 2 3 4 3 2 3 4
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4
1 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 3
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4
1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
2 3 4 3 2 3 4 3 2 3 4
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4
1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
2 3 4 3 2 3 4 3 2 3 4
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4
1 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 3
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4
1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4 3 4 5 4
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
2 3 4 3 2 3 4 3 2 3 4
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4
1 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 3
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

© 2011, Dover Publications, Inc.
Used by permission.