Lesson 1 Feedback: November 8, 2022

This is a strange way to begin our feedback sessions!

I have never done a written session before, so it's a first for everyone. I'm going to attempt to follow the same format as always. One big difference is it'll probably be much faster for you to read through the feedback than the time taken to watch a session. Still, I encourage you to watch the videos and listen to the feedback for everyone. It won't take that long, and it'll also serve to give you some insight on your own practice. There will be links for each performance in this document so that you can follow along. Not to mention, the feedback I give later on will build on the feedback I give earlier on.

Depending on how long this takes, I'm aiming for 10 recordings to give feedback to – a little less per normal because typing is labour-intensive. If it doesn't take too long, I might come back and do a little more feedback once I've addressed every class. This means I'll be using my friend the Random Number Generator as we go. So if I miss you this week, two things:

1) I'll put your name on Anna's list, and she'll have a listen to you later in the week!
2) You'll be the priority for next week's feedback!

Without further ado, let's get started.

Allegretto: ManYing
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgJ-J1TBxb0&t=61s

Hi, for week 1, I'm submitting Allegretto - Bartok.

A very tricky piece - had a lot of problems with the left-hand chords which slowed me down. My 4th finger is quite weak. I worked on practising them separately, but more work is needed to make it more fluid. I also stumbled at the end, but it was fun to learn something quite different.

Welcome back, ManYing! Lovely A section! Good tone, cleanly executed. Watch that you're not missing any staccatos like in m3 and m7 (RH). Same with measures 13+14 – make sure there are no accidental slurs creeping in! I'd love to hear a contrasting mezzo forte/forte sound in the B section to bring the piece to life, and as a nice contrast to the beautiful tone you bring to the A section.

Another thing you can work on is keeping all of your RH/LH chord in complete unison. So when you're playing 4 notes spread between the hands (say, 3 in LH and 1 in RH), try to play with a quick enough attack that all 4 notes are struck simultaneously. Easier said than done. 😊 I'd love to hear a ritardando toward the end!

Very nice work with evenness and consistency, this feels fluent. Good work on the tempo in a single week.

Allegretto: Ihsiu (un: MaxDaddy)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsY6MqVm2lk

Very strong start to class! Impressive tempo at the end of the week – you're probably able to drop this piece and move on, as it's quite accomplished already. Nice evenness, tempo, and accuracy.

Couple things to work on:

1) Make sure some of your staccatos aren't disappearing. One example is measure 22-24, when you do the B section crossover – this becomes a legato passage. You'll want to drill these measures to make sure that each note is fully detached from the next and that blank space can be heard between them.
2) Sometimes an accidental legato creeps across the barline. In the first four measures, for example, there's a drag between measure 2-3 (and I note it a few more times). It's certainly not a major issue, but if you wanted to spend 5-10 minutes on it before moving on, this is what I'd recommend working on.

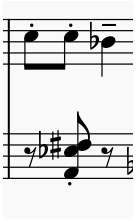
Nice staccatos overall, though – they have a good sound overall. I'd love to hear a little more oomph in your playing in the mezzo forte/forte sections as well. Good work!

Allegretto: Stefan
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akyDTQjN8ak

This is my status after two weeks (I started too early). It started to become ok only towards the end of the first week. The speed gain in the second week came automatically, might still be on the slower side, though. I still find this difficult… but, hey, this is grade 2 :wink:…

Welcome back, Stefan! Nice strong start – solid tempo and good attention to detail overall. I'd love a louder sound with the tenutos, just by letting the arms drop into them a bit more. On m4 and similar – something with a sharper and faster attack. Not aggressive, though, because we want to be mindful of the character of the piece.

Wonderful dynamics in the B section – love the diminuendo especially, and how you don't lose momentum while you're doing it. Nice ritardando toward the end!



Double-check the LH notes you're playing here – I can't tell, but my ears flagged it (toward the very end).

The only other idea I have is to perhaps find more of an "upward" sound with the staccatos, so that they have a lighter, lifting sound as opposed to a more decisive "downward" sound. Apologies, I know it's hopelessly abstract. Great work.

Allegretto: Rick

Allegretto - This is about as good as I have gotten it thus far - still a little discombobulated in the hand over hand area but have improved from where I started!

Great to have you back, Rick! And bonus points for use of the word discombobulated. I absolutely love your articulation details in the A section – very nicely done. "Clean" is the word I'm looking for. To be incredibly nitpicky, watch out for the B section accents – for some reason, your crisp simultaneous chords get a little wobbly here. You could drill this a few times to work on all four notes striking at once (it's tough with accidentals in there because it changes the hand shape). Be careful you don't lose those wonderful staccatos in measures 13-14!

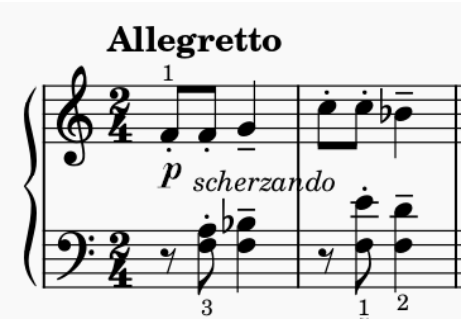
When you are playing the repeated F chords in the RH in the B section, I'd love if you can find more of an upward sound with those chords to keep them light and fluffy like most of your other staccato notes. 😊

Really impressed by the control, vibrancy, and tempo of this. Fabulous work, well ahead of what I would expect for a first week.

Allegretto: Man Ha
https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipPxi7NDy1Gd99dOzXXZPbE4_psHyy77B_zsLA6wRM9pwF5qSG2tB6yVA7bfDZsmLw?key=RUo0UzZNYXNwTTZJWHJQWlpodk1QNlRDSGtGYlR3

Allegretto a bit rusty and slow, nor sharp in the staccato. Will work more on it.

Great to have you back, Man Ha! I'm really happy with the sound of your staccatos in the A section. Be careful with the quarter notes in the A section (the ones with tenutos), as you're tending to play these like 8th notes. You want to make sure to hold them for the duration of 2 8th notes. I recommend trying just the first four measures, being sure to count out loud in m1+2! Think of the tenuto as a "stop-and-hold". You do this in other parts, just not the beginning. 😊



Double-check your notes on m9 (I think you're playing a LH G instead of a LH F). Same goes for the first chord on m16 and m26 – might be missing a sharp? Navigating all of those chord jumps in the B section is a big challenge – on week 2, I highly recommend spending the majority of your practice time here, as you seem very comfortable with the A section overall.

Identify the parts that are more challenging: broadly, m12-18 and the last line. Really target these in week 2 to try to iron them out and find some ease. Nice work!

Allegretto: Bryan
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_ALK_WG_wk

Hello pianists!

Here's my week 1 submission. I guess my ego got involved and made me chose the hardest piece. Well, there you go ego. This thing spanked me. Fun though, and real pretty. Full of mistakes, hiccups, and certainly forgot the staccato and other articulations in certain areas. I was a bit nervous while recording it, but there it is.

Welcome to the group! 😊 Everyone gets nervous recording, so you're in good company there. Very nice A section – my comments are going to echo Ihsiu's here – watch that you're not creating an accidental slur across the barline in spots like m1-2, m2-3, and so on. Keep every staccato fully separated from the next, which you're generally doing well. This includes difficult transitional passages such as from measures 12-14. Even if you have to play this part very slow (and I recommend you do!), make sure each and every chord is separated by the sound of blank space.

(Every time I write "blank space" I think of T Swift – *shakes fist at T Swift)*

One suggestion for Week 2 of this piece is to really hone in on your weakest links. Which parts do you have to slow down the most? Find those parts, and figure out what tempo you're playing them. Write down the (slow) tempo number. Then identify the tempo of parts you're comfortable with (like the A section). Note the discrepancy and try to close the gap this week by practicing small sections (2-bar sections) at a time. Really good accuracy and rhythmic evenness overall – really nice start!

Allegretto: Sarah

Here is my attempt at Allegretto. Still needs work but it's the best I could do within the week… Looks like Allegretto was a popular choice!

Welcome to the group, Sarah! Don't worry about a piece needing work – that's to be expected, and these ones will require 2-3 weeks for most people. You're already crushing it in your first week, this is an awesome recording! Overall I'm really impressed by the tempo and accuracy. Just a few things to watch for:

1. For week 2, note the parts that you tend to slow down for (the last line, and the LH chord-moving part in the first B section). Figure out what tempo you're playing this at. And then do two things: play the whole piece at that (slower) tempo when you do full play-throughs, and, working in 2-4 measure increments, work to incrementally speed up these parts so that they get to the level of your easier parts (like the A section). In all honesty, if you were to play this piece at the speed of your B section, by lowering your faster parts down about 20BPM, that would still be an excellent tempo for a final recording. I tend not to be too concerned about getting everything up-to-speed unless it's a piece you really like and want to master.
2. Your staccatos are nicely observed throughout, but I'd encourage you to laser in on them even more – as I've mentioned with some others, watch that you're not creating accidental slurs between some barlines, and be especially diligent that there is space between notes like m12-14.

Wonderful work!

Children's Song – Bartok: Suma
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5SUAGJ2M6I

Lovely piece.

Great to have you back Suma! Love the attention to detail in the first line, and a really nice tone too. Hold those quarter note tenutos on m2 and m4 a little longer – they need to be the full beat, and even a bit beyond one beat – nice and stretched out.

Really nice attention to dynamic detail throughout this piece as well. This piece is quite dull without dynamics and you seem you intuit that really nicely. Watch your LH quarter notes in m10-13 as these feel like they're speeding up and rushing the beat. 2-note slurs are awesome all the way through. I notice that your finishing tempo is a bit faster from your starting tempo – this is something you could work on especially in places like m10-13 where you're speeding up. Usually when the tempo of a piece creeps up, it's because of a few hinges in the piece, and this would be one.

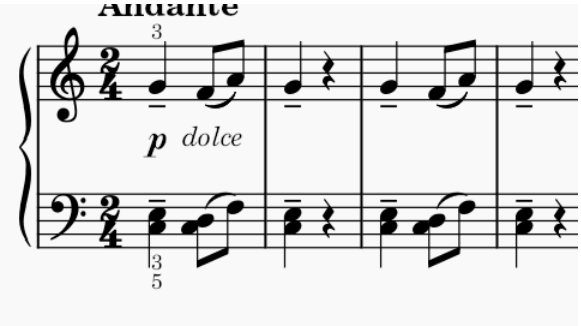
Very nice start. This one probably doesn't need a lot of work for week 2 – just some touch-ups.

Children's Song – Ted
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IljNxu5GhU0

Here is Children's Song. Getting the harmonic intervals smooth and coordinated proved to be a continuing challenge. I would make a recording thinking "great, nailed it" only to listen back and hear a bunch of spots where one note sounds before/after the other. This take is no exception - especially near the end around measures 24 - 26.

Nice to see you in this group! Just like with Suma, you've paid really nice attention to detail throughout. Good 2-note slurs and dynamics especially.

One thing that seems to be catching me – it's a subtle thing, but maybe something to look at – your 8th notes feel *ever-so-slightly* fast.



I'm hearing this underlying pulse, and there's nothing wrong with your rhythm. But there's this marginal acceleration that seems to happen in the 8th notes, as with m1 and m3, that make it feel almost rushed. It might be worth manually tapping out the beat and playing along (one hand) while consciously trying to slow the pace of the right hand 8th notes. It's a very minor point.

You're finding really nice delicacy overall, and beautiful dynamics – the only thing I might change is with the pianissimo on m21 – this is good, but don't start that crescendo too early! And even when you build, make sure you're not landing too loudly for the final notes. Great work!

Engergico: Alex
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pQeCI2ENaM

Nice to see you in this group! Wonderful performance of this piece! I'd love to hear more dramatic crescendos in the first page. Really limber triplets, these come out sounding very fluid and natural – I just want a bit more drama. Beautiful staccatos.

Nice downward scales – try to keep that 2-note slur in m23 (and the one previous), and subsequent slur in m24! In the final line, make sure you make a nice clear lift between each of those chord transitions – we don't want the LH to sound legato here. Keep it nice and crisp.

Overall, this is a very fluent performance that just begs for more zest and energy – more forte, more slight accenting on downbeats (emphasizing the pulse), and a louder sound when it's required (cresc mentioned above, etc). Very happy with this, though – really nice rhythmic work (tempo + accuracy) especially!