



Marian Steyl is a part-time lecturer at Stellenbosch University, with her main focus on organ methodology. She studied at the Universities of Stellenbosch and Witwatersrand. She obtained an MMus degree at Stellenbosch University in 2018 with a thesis entitled *Organ tuition for beginners without previous keyboard skills: A critical evaluation of four published methods against the background of initial piano tuition and general organ pedagogy*.

Mario Nell is a senior lecturer at the Music Department of Stellenbosch University and Head of Organ Studies and Church Music. He studied at the Universities of Port Elizabeth, Stellenbosch and Cape Town before he continued his studies at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany and the University of Zürich, Switzerland. In 2015 he completed an integrated PhD (Music) at the Stellenbosch University.



GAWIE CILLIERS MEMORIAL LECTURE

ORGAN TUITION FOR BEGINNERS – THE METHOD BEHIND THE METHODS¹

MARIAN STEYL & MARIO NELL

ABSTRACT

There exists a general opinion that organ beginners should have basic keyboard skills before organ tuition may commence. This viewpoint is explicitly confirmed by various organ pedagogues and beginners' methods.

For this article, eight published beginners' methods, four intended for beginners with keyboard proficiency and four designed for neophytes at the keyboard, were investigated to determine whether they are sufficiently comprehensive and diversified to meet the requirements of organ beginners with varied profiles. The evaluation was done against the background of the writings of organ pedagogues

¹ This article is based on a master's research project on organ tuition for beginners (Steyl, 2018).

and their ideals for a sound organ technique, as well as the approach of piano pedagogues to initial tuition with the focus on comprehensive music tuition.

The traditional prerequisite for established keyboard skills is also considered in terms of the difference between the sound production and technical requirements of the piano and the organ.

I. Introduction

There is a tendency, in many countries worldwide, that the prospective organ student needs an established keyboard technique in order to begin with organ studies – a tendency that is confirmed by most of the organists and organ pedagogues whose theories and ideals will be discussed in this article. However, numerous prospective organ students with no previously acquired keyboard skills have shown interest in taking organ lessons.

A diverse spectrum of pedagogical books and articles as well as teaching methods for beginners has been published, especially in the second half of the 20th century. As far as organ beginners are concerned, the term ‘beginner’ can, however, be misleading: for example, a first-year music student at a tertiary institution with piano as main instrument and organ as second instrument is referred to as a beginner, as is a 13-year old learner with no or little keyboard tuition – their requirements of a beginners’ method, for example, would be completely different.

In order to determine whether teaching methods currently available are sufficiently comprehensive to meet the requirements of such a diverse spectrum of beginners, one should draw from the writings of organ pedagogues and piano pedagogues, thus building a paradigm against which methods could be considered. To evaluate the beginners’ process, one needs to know what the end result should be.

The questions that need to be addressed in this discussion on beginners’ tuition for organ will be based on the following criteria:

- What are the requirements of a sound organ technique according to renowned organ pedagogues?
- How do piano pedagogues approach initial keyboard tuition to ensure comprehensive musical development for the beginner?
- Is it advisable to start keyboard tuition on the organ, or is it to the student’s advantage to start with piano tuition in order to first establish basic keyboard skills?
- Are the available published beginners’ methods comprehensive in terms of these consulted resources, and are they diversified to meet the requirements of organ beginners with varied profiles?

It is a general viewpoint that an organist should have a good reading ability, knowledge of music theory and harmony and developed improvisational skills – the concept of ‘musicianship’ also includes these skills. These aspects of music tuition lead this investigation to piano pedagogy. When the organ beginner is a neophyte at the keyboard, the organ teacher has the responsibility to include the aspects of musicianship, important cornerstones of music tuition, into the teaching programme.

2. The requirements of a sound organ technique according to renowned organ pedagogues

A multitude of comprehensive academic treatises on organ playing and organ technique have been published during the 20th and 21st centuries. This article will mostly rely on the following sources:

- *Organ Technique: An Historical Approach*, Sandra Soderland (1986)
- *Making Music on the Organ*, Peter Hurford (1990)
- *Historical Performance Practice in Organ Playing*, Jon Laukvik (1996)
- *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ*, Thistlethwait and Webber (1998)
- *Organ Technique*, Jacques van Oortmerssen (2002)

Although some of these treatises are referred to as 'methods', they are not primarily aimed at beginners' tuition. The advanced concepts of organ playing addressed in these writings, discussed in academic style and put into historical perspective, seem beyond the scope of a discussion on beginners' methods. However, in taking cognisance of these technical and musical ideals in more advanced playing, the foundations laid in beginners' tuition can be shaped to lead ultimately to a more profound approach to organ performance. In acknowledging the requirements of a solid organ technique as stipulated by these writers, the paradigm according to which current methods can be evaluated might be more comprehensive.

In his book *Making Music on the Organ*, Peter Hurford discusses the unique characteristics of the organ. Taking cognisance of these innate characteristics of the organ is essential when investigating beginners' tuition, especially when defending the argument that one should be able to start music tuition with organ lessons, without the requirement of first having to take piano lessons.

When teaching younger and physically small learners, the physical size of the instrument plays a role in the approach of presenting learning material. In addition to this, the psychological challenge that the sheer size of the instrument poses, needs to be considered by the teacher. Hurford addresses this matter as follows:

Even a small organ is a large instrument; while a large organ – especially to the inexperienced player – can be either an intimidating Gargantua, or a seductive enchantress whose responses inflate her lover's ego, blinding him to his technical and musical shortcomings (Hurford, 1990:8).

The uniform volume, regardless of the tone's duration, is a characteristic that underlies a significant part of the didactical approach to organ tuition as opposed to piano tuition in terms of touch. Hurford describes this feature of organ tones not having a "natural limitation" to their duration, as 'Lack of the Dying Fall' (ibid.). This 'Lack of the Dying Fall' requires a specific approach to legato playing - in fact, according to Hurford it should be avoided, because continuous legato playing prevents the clear articulation of music. The use of silence between notes, or in Hurford's words "judicious silence", is an essential aspect of organ playing (Hurford, 1990:9).

The uniformity of sound projection, in other words the constant vowel sound of a pipe, is the other unique feature of organ tones and is related to the uniform volume. In most orchestral instruments vibrato can add to the projection of an expressive, musical line, but once a key on the organ has been depressed, it is not possible to alter the sound through any technical device. Also unique to an organ tone is that the sound is “cut off in an organ pipe, rather than sustained in a vibrating string” (Kim, 2002:51). One of the primary new skills to be introduced to a pianist learning to play the organ, is the technique of controlling the release of the key - an essential aspect of organ touch (touch being the performer’s means to play expressively).

Registration is the organist’s control over tone quality. The particular sound produced by a pipe is to a large extent determined by the organ builder and/or intonator, “whose artistry and craftsmanship alone are responsible for the tone quality, volume and regulation of each pipe in relation to its neighbour” (Hurford, 1990:10). The organist’s control over the sound that is produced is limited to the selection of registers. In most methodological and didactical books for organ, a discussion on the basic elements of the instrument’s build and structure is included. Hurford claims that an attractive instrumental sound is one of the first requirements of convincing music-making, and that the establishing of a yardstick in sound quality is a vital part of the organist’s education (Hurford, 1990:35).

Marshall confirms this, referring to registration as a “vital aspect of organ playing” (Thistlethwait & Webber, 1998:107) that demands thorough knowledge of the instruments and treatises of different periods, an “ear attuned to instrumental colour, a vivid musical imagination and a sense of style” (ibid.).

The last unique characteristic of the organ dealt with in *Making Music on the Organ*, is the ‘key action’, which Hurford refers to as the “link between the heart of the player and the tonal source of his musical medium” (Hurford, 1990:10). The challenge of dealing with the different types of actions from one organ to another is inevitable and often a complicating factor in organ performance, even more so when the organist is inexperienced.

2.1 Aspects of a sound organ technique

The treatises of Soderland, Hurford, Laukvik, Marshall and Van Oortmerssen prove the following aspects as being the pillars of a sound organ technique:

- Posture and position at the organ
- Touch and articulation
- Fingering and pedalling

2.1.1 Posture and position

Marshall approaches this aspect of organ technique by quoting historical treatises from writers such as Girolama Diruta (c. 1545-1610), Guillaume-Gabriel Nivers (1632-1740), Johann Nicolaus Forkel (1749-1818), and Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens (1823-1881). Their views on posture and position at the organ are summarised by Marshall as a natural relaxed position, with the hand shaped like a cup and the wrist in line with the hand, the fingers pressing rather than striking the keys, the organist’s body forward enough on the bench to allow the legs to pivot sideways with the heels and toes of both feet resting

lightly on the pedals and legs held together loosely for intervals up to a fifth and only separating for intervals larger than a fifth (Thistlethwait & Webber, 1998:93). These views are still reflected in more recently published organ methods.

Jacques van Oortmerssen regards *habitus* or posture as the basis of technical development, which has a distinct influence on all aspects of technique and “directly enhances tone production and expression” (Van Oortmerssen, 2002:13). The importance of the *habitus* cannot be overestimated. The different components of technique, according to Van Oortmerssen, are all related to each other in the following way (ibid.):

Habitus (posture) → relaxation → fingering/pedalling → contact with the key →
tone production and expression

Posture and position at the keyboard should be considered as essential aspects in beginners’ tuition, cultivating good habits in the initial stages of tuition. The arguments of Marshall and Van Oortmerssen underline that the requirements for a good posture for organ playing is specific and unique to the instrument. A ‘good’ posture, namely a “natural position of arms, hands and legs, [aimed at] relaxation and [allowing] maximum contact with the keys” (Van Oortmerssen, 2002:14), allows the organist to focus on tone production and play with expression (ibid.). In addition to posture, Van Oortmerssen discusses the importance of the correct sitting position, the position of the pelvis, the bench, and a good posture for pedalling.

Hurford also emphasises the importance of a natural and relaxed physical approach to organ technique, yet hints that this ideal ‘natural’ technique is most ‘unnatural’ in terms of the human body: “Hands were not fashioned with the keyboard player in mind” (Hurford, 1990:44), and later in the same discussion: “As a vehicle for musical line, feet were surely even less in our Creator’s mind than were a keyboardist’s hands” (Hurford, 1990:47).

A comfortable demeanour is the basis of technical ease – less tension in the body allows “sufficient energy and mental capacity left over to devote to the spiritual and emotional sides of music making” (Van Oortmerssen, 2002:12). In 1929 the Hungarian piano pedagogue Margit Varró (1929:178) wrote that, although technique alone cannot guarantee good music making, the projection of artistic ideas is only possible with complete technical control.

2.1.2 Touch and articulation

C.P.E. Bach defined this essential aspect of keyboard technique, touch, with the following words, first published in 1753:

There are many who play stickily, as if they had glue between their fingers. Their touch is lethargic; they hold notes too long. Others, in an attempt to correct this, leave the keys too soon, as if they burned. Both are wrong. Midway between these

extremes is best. Here again I speak in general, for every kind of touch has its use (C.P.E. Bach in Kim, 2002:1).²

Organ touch refers to the way in which the tones are connected to each other or separated from each other; the amount of weight in the hand or pressure applied to the key does not play a significant role in organ touch, as it would in playing piano for instance. Laukvik (1996:23) uses the term 'touch' for the "manner in which a key is depressed". Touch comprises attack, tone and decay, or "the initial transient, the note itself and the resonance after wind has been cut off" (Hurford, 1990:52). Pipe speech is influenced by the way in which a key is depressed (specifically on organs with tracker key action), which makes the element of touch an essential area of study in organ pedagogy. Van Oortmerssen's views on touch relate to early music specifically, but the priority that he lends to this aspect of organ playing confirms its essence in organ tuition in general. He refers to this aspect as the organist's control over the actual sound of an organ (Van Oortmerssen, 2002:20).

Laukvik's discussion on articulation offers a short description of the development of organ technique from the time when keys were played with the whole fist, up to the time of C.P.E. Bach and D.G. Türk, where all unmarked notes were to be separated by short silences. Laukvik quotes Türk when he explains that playing in this way leads to transparency in sound and texture, ensuring that one "hears each note with its due strength separated in a round and clear way from the other" (Türk in Laukvik, 1996:29).

Laukvik, however, proceeds with the argument that playing in this manner (with transparency in sound) is not necessarily expressive, because all the notes "have the same dynamic relationship to each other" (Laukvik, 1996:30). He compares this with an unnatural way of speaking, where all the syllables have the same duration and dynamic level (ibid.). Accents in music are created by differentiating the duration of notes - some are decided upon by the composer himself and is already written in the composition, but others need to be "created by the interpreter of the music" (ibid.).

Marshall adds that dynamic stability makes the organ ideal for the performance of counterpoint, where the independent parts are outlined by the uniformity of organ tone, and the clear articulation of these parts in polyphony produces lines that "can be heard clearly" (Thistlethwait & Webber, 1998:93). Organists do not have dynamic variation at their disposal to "emphasize metrically and thematically important notes" - the definition of pulse and accents is obtained by "taking advantage of acoustical properties" (Thistlethwait & Webber, 1998:96). Preceding a note with silence or delaying a note rhythmically makes it stand out more vividly than others, while lengthening a note relative to others can make it sound stronger (ibid.).

Hurford includes an in-depth discussion on organ sound and pipe speech, touch, time and silence as techniques of musical projection, as well as forms of *rubato*. His detailed explanation of these concepts underlines that the organ, with its innate characteristics as discussed earlier, requires specific technical

² This quotation of C.P.E. Bach was translated by Mitchell (1949:42) and used by Kim as an opening to the introduction of his thesis *Touch and Articulation on the Organ: Historical and Pedagogical Perspectives* (2002).

approaches for expressive playing. The informed application of these techniques, the subtle control of duration of sound and silences, and the alteration of note values based on musical intuition and knowledge of style, will ultimately be based on decisions made by a good ear - Hurford reckons that "the ear is the best organ an organist ever has" (Hurford, 1990:52).

Sandra Soderland discusses the organ literature from around 1800 in a chapter entitled 'Piano Technique at the Organ'. This was a time when the development of the piano profoundly affected organ performance; it was "a transitional period for organ technique" (Soderland, 1986:147), in which legato playing became more prevalent. The organ also underwent changes concerning dynamics and tone colour, undoubtedly as a result of the increasing dominance of the piano and the "entirely new aesthetic" (ibid.) it brought about. The organ literature of this period requires a "wide variety of performance techniques, including some typically pianistic ones" (Soderland, 1986:151).

With the publication of Jacques Lemmens's method *École d'orgue: Basée sur le Plain-Chant Romain* in 1862, a new era of careful fingering, efficient pedalling, and exact control of attack and release, was initiated in France. This would ultimately lay the foundation for the development of the theory and practice of authentic performance, where organ technique encompasses appropriate touches for different styles. This aspect needs careful consideration by the organ teacher, as well as the question of when and how different touches for different styles should be introduced in the tuition.

Upon comparing organ methods published in the late 20th century, a heightened awareness of the need to differentiate between techniques used for the 18th century repertoire and that of the 19th century, is evident. This is clearly illustrated in the method of Gleason, where a section on performance practice of early music is added only to the seventh and eighth editions, with the fingering in the eighth edition being further improved to be stylistically authentic. This 'awareness' reflects "the reality that today's organist must be aware that different organs and different music call for different styles of performance" (Kim, 2002:48), implying that the legato approach of the French school of teaching should now co-exist with the performance practice of earlier music.

The concurrent development of differentiated performance practices is an aspect of organ tuition that also needs careful consideration. Students should be aware of the fact that different styles require different approaches to touch and articulation. Organ pedagogues, among them Laukvik and Soderland, recommend that organ tuition should commence with legato touch. It is a relatively easier touch to master, which allows the beginner to focus on the development of coordination between hands and feet.

John Brock disagrees with this in his article entitled *Chickens, Eggs, and Beginning Organ Technique*, published in *The American Organist* (1997). According to Brock, there are advantages to commencing organ tuition with historical keyboard technique:

Starting with early keyboard technique not only brings with it the requirement that the student learn some new fingering patterns and new ways to approach the keyboard, but also requires some sophisticated decisions about degrees of touch. Since the application of the eighteenth-century touch is related to meter and accents, the student learns to see and hear the rhythmic and metrical structure of the music (Brock, 1997:66-67).

2.1.3 Fingering and pedalling

The need to make use of carefully reasoned *Applikaturen* (fingering) has been raised by many experts. The attention this has received in organ methods and publications about performance practice since C.P.E. Bach would, quite literally, fill volumes (Van Oortmerssen, 2002:22).

With these words Van Oortmerssen captures the importance with which these aspects of fingering and pedalling should be regarded. Marshall refers to this aspect of organ playing as “technical devices used to achieve control over the fundamentals of articulation and timing” (Thistlethwait & Webber, 1998:103).

Fingering techniques, vital to obtaining fluid legato lines, were pivotal in the methods of Lemmens, Widor and Vierne in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: finger substitution, *glissando*, using the base and tip of the thumb, and finger crossing. Finger substitution, especially, was of vital importance to Lemmens’s fingering system for legato playing.

Pedalling is mostly addressed in a similar way as fingering. Laukvik maintains that the technique of playing with toes, as is more commonly used in early music, is normally the starting point of teaching pedal technique. He favours this manner of playing, because his aim is the complete control of attack and articulation and, with that, variety in tone production and expression (Laukvik, 1996:53).

Lemmens emphasised substitution of feet: either employing both feet or the toe and heel of one foot. To Widor, precise coordination of hands and feet was the ultimate goal, and he valued a pedal technique where the knees and/or heels stay in contact. He propagated a pedal technique where heels were to be used as much as toes: the organist has “fourteen fingers - ten on the hands and four on the feet” (Widor in Shi, 1998:160).

Similar to fingering, the underlying goal in pedalling should be to find the most efficient and comfortable way to approach the pedal board.

2.2 Conclusion

Upon considering the ideals as set out by organists, pedagogues and academics such as Hurford, Laukvik, Marshall and Van Oortmerssen, the profound organist could be defined as one who has the technical ability to produce the music that he/she envisages based on knowledge of his/her instrument and its literature in historical and stylistic context.

Attention should be given to posture and the correct position at the console with consideration of the style of the music to be performed. This aspect will prove to be a challenge for many beginners and their teachers. Many organ beginners might already have an established piano technique, and those who are neophytes at the keyboard may be either young and physically small, or adult with all the challenges that accompany the development of new cognitive and motoric habits in such students.

The characteristics of organ tones not having a natural decay, the uniformity in tone regardless of the duration of the note, as well as the fact that the attack and release of a note affects the pipe speech, demand specific skills or abilities to realise the composer’s intent when performing. Knowledge is

required of the action of the organ, the rhythmic, melodic, harmonic and structural content of the music (the form), as well as the stylistic elements applicable to the interpretation of the music. These aspects lie at the root of performance practice, and the technical aspects of posture and position at the console, touch, articulation, accent and fingering result from informed decisions made by the interpreter.

Marshall underlines, to a certain extent, the uniqueness and complexity of beginners' tuition in organ:

Although it is highly desirable for beginning organ students to be familiar with other keyboard instruments, one should not forget that the approach to playing the keys of an organ, a wind instrument, is almost diametrically opposed to that of a piano, a percussion instrument. Organists must focus on releasing the keys to create breathing space in the musical line, whereas pianists are more concerned with attacking the keys, using varying degrees of arm and body weight to produce different types of tone (Thistlethwait & Webber, 1998:109).

3. Piano pedagogy: a study of its approach to comprehensive music tuition

Teaching methodology for beginners in keyboard studies is a subject with a long history of research from different angles and perspectives, of which the concurrent teaching of keyboard technique, music theory, reading and musicianship is especially relevant to this study. An investigation into the merit of the few available organ beginners' methods for beginners would be incomplete without consulting the expertise of renowned piano pedagogues and the methods commonly used.

The skills required to master a musical instrument, in this case the piano, could be divided into three categories: the skill of reading, technical skills and musicianship.

3.1 The skill of reading

It was only towards the end of the 19th century that the development of reading and rhythmic skills found its place in the texts of method books. In the early 20th century some methods commenced their courses with simple melodies divided between the hands, based on the 'Middle C approach'. After 1920, method books with more definite guidance on the process of teaching these skills emerged, and only in 1941 the 'psychological approach to reading' was presented for the first time. Reading was now introduced according to the 'multiple key approach' with an emphasis on exploring the whole keyboard. Concurrent with that, other courses continued to present reading with the 'Middle C approach', with John Thompson's courses probably the most well-known and popular. A new approach, intervallic reading, was introduced in 1955. The use of various methods and teaching techniques to suit the contents of the learning material and the learner is currently referred to as an eclectic approach.

In the 'Middle C approach' new concepts are presented one by one to build up eventually a bigger musical picture. Each lesson introduces a new concept in notation such as one new note or a new time signature, and the learner is thus expected to learn to play and read concurrently – developing motor

and cognitive skills simultaneously. According to Piaget's natural order of learning, or Uszler's "the thing before the sign, the experience before the definition" (Uszler et al., 1991:57), the 'Middle C approach' is reversing the natural order, first presenting the definition, then defining the concept.

The multiple key method, on the other hand, presents whole concepts and then breaks them down into parts. Different five-finger positions are introduced and used in the early phases of tuition, directional reading by intervals is developed by introducing the concept of intervals, and tonic and dominant seventh chords are used to harmonise melodies from an early stage in the tuition. The learner is familiarised with elements of theory throughout a course that relies on the multiple key approach.

A third approach is intervallic reading, which emphasises the spatial-directional reading habits connected with the formation of hand-shapes and movements that follow from intervallic recognition. The intervallic approach has the distinct advantage that it reinforces playing over the full range of the keyboard.

The specific labelling or classification of an approach on a method is, however, not important, but the awareness of what the approach entails, and the sequence of presenting new concepts, are essential.

3.2 Technical skills

In the time of Clementi, Cramer, Hummel and Czerny, piano technique was initially dominated by the development of finger work and a one-sided emphasis on anatomy. This era was followed by a new awareness of the role of the arm, especially advocated by Chopin, and arm weight, as advocated by pedagogues such as Deppe and Breithaupt. A combination of these two approaches gradually developed until a mental dimension to technique was added by pedagogues such as Leschetizky.

The Hungarian pedagogue Varró was among the first to synthesise the mechanical approach with the psychological approach. She advocated the development of musicianship, and also underlined that the development of aural abilities should be the root of all musical development, including technique. Understanding this development in methodology of teaching technique serves to put its current status in perspective.

Methodology and commentary on technical concepts were often offered in the prefaces of methods, or separately in teachers' manuals. Alternatively, short exercises or studies were interspersed among the pieces in the text, or separately in supplementary books. A technical concept was therefore practised in isolation and then applied to a piece, rather than to use repertoire to develop specific aspects of technique.

Since the 1950s the use of raised keys in the early stages of piano study became popular. When playing on raised keys for the first time, the longer middle fingers are developed first, as the use of the shorter fingers on raised keys is uncomfortable. Positioning the longer third finger first puts the hand in balance, and the hand can be developed from the weak side to the strong side (using fingers 4-3-2, rather than 2-3-4), which is more natural. When drumming one's fingers on a table, for example, one notices that the fingers move easily from the fifth to the second rather than in the opposite direction.

Other schools of thought prefer the development of the outside of the hand before the development of the inside three fingers, particularly with very young students. With the thumb and fifth fingers strengthened, the hand will be better supported when the middle fingers start to play.

The aspect of touch and articulation is included in technical training with different staccato touches, and the slur receives specific attention in most methods. The tendency is to progress from big movements to smaller, more defined movements. Practising scales has been accepted as the most essential, sometimes the only, aspect of technical training for many years. This has been debated by many pedagogues – not that playing of scales should be abandoned, but practising scales should have its appropriate role in a teaching method and not be viewed as an absolute tool for developing technique. The development of technique also implies the development of tone production, varied dynamics, as well as the nuancing of tone quality and phrasing.

3.3 Musicianship

The teaching of musicianship entails the development of skills to conceive a mental image of a piece of music, and includes aural skills as well as harmonic and rhythmic comprehension. This teaching area should be considered an essential element of a beginners' method.

As early as in 1929, Varró claimed that piano tuition should be seen as *music* tuition in the first place, and that the knowledge of notes and technical skills may not be the exclusive goal (Varró, 1929:10). Russian pianist and pedagogue Heinrich Neuhaus expected his students to really understand the language of a musical work - musicians should strive to understand the complete vision of the work's logic and structure, its underlying harmonic and its essence. He believed that a pedagogue should first of all be a music teacher who brings the student to an understanding of the musical art, its ideas and emotional content (Kaufman, 2007).

In the numerous textbooks on piano pedagogy, as well as those for other instruments that were studied for this research, the common aspects addressed were the areas of reading and technique. Pedagogues differ on the other areas, labelling teaching aspects with terms such as theory and repertoire, aural and rhythmical skills, music comprehension, musicianship and musicality, including here the aspects of aural development, music literacy and creative activities such as ensemble playing, composition and improvisation. These interrelated and often overlapping aspects of music education can be included in the collective term 'musicianship'. This term seems applicable, encompassing aspects of knowledge, style, taste and skills.

Adele Marcus, in her book *Great Pianists Speak with Adele Marcus* (1979), states the following:

Musicianship must serve as the basis of all our interpretations, or the entire structure of a work loses validity and conviction. Without a musician's grasp, a performance usually becomes a series of isolated fragments. Though perhaps technically arresting, or sporadically interesting, the work cannot stand as a solid piece of architecture... Musicianship, or the WHY, is the governor of interpretation and performance (Marcus, 1979:8).

It is the cultivating of this ‘musician’s grasp’, the ‘why’ in playing, that needs to be an integral element of beginners’ tuition.

3.4 A final word on the relevance of piano pedagogy to the field of organ pedagogy

Piano tuition has dominated the world of keyboard studies since the 18th century. It was therefore essential for this study to investigate the most prominent aspects contained in this field of music education. The writings of piano pedagogues James Bastien, Max Camp, Marianne Uszler, Martha Baker-Jordan and Jeanine Jacobson, published over a period of forty years from 1977 to 2006, were consulted to investigate the principles on which piano tuition are founded. The investigation confirmed that piano pedagogy has integrated comprehensive music teaching with instrumental teaching for many years, continuously aiming to address areas that could be improved, evaluating its validity in changing times, and keeping abreast of the discourse in education and performance practice. This evolutionary trend in piano pedagogy is particularly evident in the cognisance taken of the development of sciences such as psychology and educational psychology, as well as neuroscience, applicable to music education.³ Adapted approaches to the tuition of aspects such as reading music text, technical skills, as well as encouraging creative skills such as improvising and composing, are being incorporated into new and newly edited teaching methods. The body of publications of empirical and non-empirical studies on these and many other aspects of piano pedagogy that continuously see the light, serves to confirm that the subject of piano pedagogy is a dynamic one and worth consulting when investigating aspects of organ pedagogy.

4. A critical consideration of the necessity of established keyboard skills as a prerequisite for organ studies

In an attempt to address the issue of the decreasing number of organ students, Steyn (2010) recommends a fresh approach to organ pedagogy, specifically the prerequisite of keyboard proficiency before organ tuition may begin.

In 1990, Lamprecht submitted a doctoral dissertation on the development of organ technique with the aim of systemising its methodology in which he accepts the traditional viewpoint that piano tuition should precede organ tuition.

Piano tuition is a prerequisite for organ tuition and students normally study both instruments at the same time. Piano and organ teachers should generally honour

³ Research in the field of, amongst other, the neuro-processes involved when performing or reading music and psychological factors impacting on musicians and their training, is currently a dynamic field with a myriad of articles being published on a diverse spectrum of topics relevant to beginners’ tuition. Insight in learning styles and teaching strategies can and should have a distinct effect on the design and development of beginners’ methods, and although not within the scope of this article, should be acknowledged in a study of beginners’ tuition.

similar approaches to most aspects of keyboard playing (Lamprecht, 1990:148).⁴

However, Lamprecht also accepts that the basic use of the playing apparatus is the only common denominator between organ and piano technique: the use of the fingers, and the attack of notes on the manuals. He quotes Arthur Wills who stated that “apart from the keyboard, the only shared feature, the organ has nothing in common with the harpsichord and piano” (Wills, 1984:25). Lamprecht, despite his claim that piano technique should form the foundation of organ technique, criticises the application of a uniform approach to tone production and technique for different keyboard instruments.

Marshall is even more direct about this:

Although it is highly desirable for beginning organ students to be familiar with other keyboard instruments, one should not forget that the approach to playing the keys of an organ, a wind instrument, is almost diametrically opposed to that of a piano, a percussion instrument (Marshall in Thistlethwait & Webber, 1998:109).

The mutual influence that the technique of different keyboard instruments had on one another is evident, but the difference lies in the ‘subtle elements’ of each instrument’s playing technique. Differences between piano and organ technique, such as the use of arm weight and mobility of the upper body in piano playing, attack and release of organ notes because of the continued sound, the lack of *decrescendo* of an organ tone, and the influence of the sustained pedal in legato playing on the piano, are highlighted by Lamprecht. He warns that each keyboard instrument requires to be managed according to its uniqueness, and that it is essential to identify exactly which pianistic playing techniques apply to organ technique (Lamprecht, 1990:149).

In Rhoodie’s article on technical development for piano beginners in *The South African Music Teacher of 2013/2014*, she states her concern with technical training that is “treated as a mechanical procedure and is not harmoniously integrated with the development of sound and expression” (Rhoodie, 2013:42). The development of technique is interwoven with musical and expressive requirements, and it is of primary importance to differentiate between different touches and sounds, “thereby creating harmony between technique, sound control and expression” (ibid.). Rhoodie’s argument captures the essence of the reconsideration of this prerequisite. Sound control and expression will be achieved in different ways on a piano and on an organ – therefore, if the musical and expressive requirements for organ playing should be integrated with initial development of technique, it goes without saying that the learner will benefit in starting keyboard training on an organ, if that is the instrument of his/her choice.

It is obvious that the progress of a student already accomplished in playing other keyboard instruments and with basic knowledge of music theory will be much quicker, and that there are certain

⁴ Own translation. Original Afrikaans text: *Klavieronderrig is ’n voorvereiste vir orrelonderrig en studente bestudeer meestal beide instrumente gelyktydig. Klavier- en orrelpedagogee behoort oor die algemeen enerses benaderings te huldig ten opsigte van sekere aspekte van klawerbordspel. Al die manueel-aanslagvorms wat in orrelspeel gebruik word, kom ook in klavierspel voor* (Lamprecht, 1990:148).

advantages to introducing the organ, with its complexities, to an experienced musician. Yet, it cannot be denied that should a learner be interested to start music tuition on the organ, it would be an opportunity to develop skills specific to the organ in a more intuitive way. The organ is an instrument that might trigger a young child's level of curiosity and energy very well: the child could play with his/her hands and feet, thus incorporating the whole body; the different sounds and combinations thereof that the instrument can produce speak directly to a child's need to experiment and create; and the mechanism of an organ with its many knobs, pistons and pedals, to name but a few, can appeal to most children's curiosity. These features and the organ's majestic or mysterious sounds, larger and louder than anything else a child could produce at a young age, prove the instrument to be extremely suitable to capture the imagination of a prospective young musician.

Of course, the challenges of a young learner at the organ are as multiple as the advantages. The organ is a large instrument which might cause a problem for small bodies, the distance from the sheet music is greater than at a piano, the extra stave for the pedal part will add to the demands on the reading facility, and the coordination of the whole body will be more demanding on a child. But, apart from the size of the instrument versus the size of a young child, all of the above problems still apply to experienced keyboard players, and crossing those bridges at a younger age might prove to lead to a more natural way of mastering a new instrument compared to 'unlearning' some established techniques or habits intended for another instrument and replacing them with new ones.

5. Evaluation of beginners' methods – are they comprehensive in terms of the consulted resources?

5.1 Methods for beginners with keyboard proficiency

Four such methods widely used in South Africa, but also internationally, were selected:

- *Ars Organi* (1953) by Flor Peeters
- *Method of Organ Playing, 8th Edition* (1996) by Harold Gleason
- *Organ Technique: Modern and Early* (2000) by George H. Ritchie & George B. Stauffer
- *A Graded Anthology for Organ* (1997) by Anne Marsden Thomas

The build and mechanical composition of the organ were addressed by all four pedagogues, with explanatory chapters included in the methods. Marsden Thomas's method addresses the four main areas of concern to organists, with registration as the first area, one that she believes is an integral part of a beginner's training. This aspect has a direct influence on the student's interest in registration, an art that is singularly responsible for tone quality.

Posture and position at the console is extensively discussed in all methods, in accordance with the consulted organists' theories.

Technical skills for manual playing required by an organist include the following: control over attack and release of each key, combined playing of legato lines and detached notes with one hand, finger

extension, finger independence, finger substitution, finger *glissando* and finger crossing, as well as scales. These skills are introduced by means of exercises in Peeters, Gleason, and Ritchie and Stauffer. Marsden Thomas, however, approaches technical development differently, using mostly repertoire to present the skills and offering guidelines with each piece.

In pedal playing, students first have to learn to 'find' the pedal keys. Methods differ in their approaches to this, with Gleason, and Ritchie and Stauffer suggesting a method of 'feeling' intervals with heels and knees, while Peeters and Marsden Thomas's approach is described by Steyn as a 'feel-method' (Steyn, 2010:47) with a kinetic sensation between the feet. The technical skills of pedal playing correspond in some way with the skills needed for manual playing, being control over attack and release of keys, playing with consecutive toes, toe-heel playing, foot substitution and foot *glissando*.

An important aspect of beginners' tuition is to develop coordination in order to play with hands and feet simultaneously. This is dealt with carefully in each method, starting with first combining one hand with feet, only later adding a third line. These exercises also lay the foundation for playing counterpoint, something that is inherent to organ playing.

Performance practice implies the aspects of playing that depend on the music, its style and intent of the composer, drawing from a performer's knowledge of the music more than just from the notation. Performance practice techniques in organ playing, for example, ornaments and embellishments, fingering, touch and articulation, accents and phrasing, registration, rely on the performer's knowledge of style and interpretation. Gleason advises students to study 'all subjects' related to each composition (Gleason, 1996:60). The increasing awareness of differentiating performance practice in beginners' tuition is best illustrated by comparing the fifth edition, published in 1962, to the seventh and eighth editions, published in 1988 and 1996 respectively. The seventh and eighth editions both include a section on performance practice of early music, with the suggested fingering of pieces in the eighth edition stylistically more accurate than that of the earlier editions.

Peeters illustrates each aspect of performance practice with excerpts from well-known compositions from the organ repertoire, and Marsden Thomas provides 'Study Notes' with practical guidance on style as well as historical perspective. Ritchie and Stauffer, renowned for their "dualistic" approach to performance practice, divide the contents of the method into two parts, with the title of Part One 'Modern Organ Technique: A Method of Legato Playing for Music Composed after 1750', and Part Two 'Early Organ Technique: A Method of Articulated Playing for Music Composed before 1750'.

These four methods address the aspects of a sound organ technique in accordance with the ideals of the organists and pedagogues consulted in this study. Each method, however, is unique in the pace of progress, the style of technical exercises, the approach to differentiated articulation, and repertoire. Should the teacher be familiar with each method, an informed choice on which method or combination of methods to use could be made in terms of the beginner's profile and needs.

These methods also address only technical matters and aspects of style specific to the organ, and it is generally done very thoroughly. However, if any area in an organ beginner's development was neglected, such as theory, aural development or reading skills, the teacher will be required to work with other sources in a creative way in order to provide 'music tuition' and not merely 'organ tuition'.

5.2 Beginners' courses designed for students with no keyboard skills

The evaluation of beginners' courses designed specifically for the needs of students with no previously acquired keyboard skills should be done by investigating the following:

- How do the available courses compare with beginners' courses aimed at students with previous keyboard experience as well as the ideals of widely recognised organ pedagogues?
- Do these beginners' courses pay attention to all aspects of musical development in alignment with the viewpoints of piano pedagogues?

Research in preparation of this study showed that the following beginners' methods could be the most suitable for students with no keyboard experience and/or previous musical experience, available internationally:

- *Play the Organ* (1990) by David Sanger
- *Organ Tutor* (2003) by Friedhelm Deis
- *Organo Pleno* (2006) by Christian Ingelse
- *Suzuki Organ School* (2006) by Shinichi Suzuki, developed by Gunilla Rönnerberg and Lars Hagström

The evaluation of these methods led to the conclusion that each has value as a method suitable for an organ beginner without keyboard skills. Each method, however, would be at its most effective for a beginner with a specific profile.

Sanger's method proved to be fairly comprehensive in addressing theoretical and technical aspects. However, the presentation of essential theoretical aspects is done only in an introductory way and will need to be supplemented by additional sources. A lack of sufficient opportunity to develop technical skills will also necessitate additional material. The concise introduction of theoretical concepts and the quick pace of progression leave this method suitable for learners with well-developed cognitive skills and preferably with musical experience of some kind. For such students, the absence of developing specific finger techniques required by organists, such as finger substitution and finger *glissando*, could result in an only partially developed organ technique.

Organ Tutor by Deis is another method in which the learning material is presented in a concise way. New concepts are mostly dealt with thoroughly and are appropriately placed in the course. However, the amount of information included in single explanations is often questionable and additional material will be needed to integrate new concepts fully with existing knowledge. The selected repertoire, consisting mostly of Baroque pieces and hymns, could be considered limited and in need of wider variety. The layout of the translated edition is another point of concern, with many pages cluttered with too much information. These factors leave this method suitable only for beginners with well-developed cognitive skills - beginners with established musical skills or more mature students. Younger learners in need of a more comprehensive musical education, however, will not necessarily benefit from these methods, as the progress is too quick at a theoretical and technical level.

Ingelse's *Organo Pleno* proved to be more suitable for younger learners, with musically pleasing pieces, often with descriptive titles that could capture the imagination of younger and more inexperienced beginners, and stimulate their creativity. The specific reference to Dutch church music may, in some instances, exclude the specific interest of some prospective organ beginners. Theoretical aspects are presented at a level that would be understood by younger learners, and the pace of progress mostly allows new aspects to be established well, although some learners will require additional material to integrate new knowledge fully with existing knowledge. Ingelse approaches music tuition in accordance with current theories in the educational and music pedagogy field.

Suzuki Organ School, developed by Rönnerberg and Hagström, is also designed with younger learners in mind, and its approach is also aligned with the current discourse in education and music pedagogy, although not in a similar way as that of Ingelse's method. In this method, the progress is determined by the learner, as each piece should be mastered before commencing with the next. Although this aspect of the method might have advantages in terms of the theories of educationists, the method does not allow much space for deviance from the prescribed curriculum. The method's pace of progress is brisk and will mostly be accomplished only by following the instructions of the teacher. Initial learning takes place primarily by imitation of either the teacher or recorded music, and the learner is dependent on teacher instruction for theoretical and musical aspects to an extent that the element of discovery and the development of autonomy may be compromised. In terms of pedagogical principles it seems as if the method is built on presenting small units at a time, resulting ultimately in mastering the whole - a feature of the method that could be criticised in terms of current educational trends.

6. Concluding remarks

The evaluation of organ methods was done against the backdrop of the principles and theories of organ pedagogues Hurford, Laukvik, Marshall and Van Oortmerssen. Their theories were investigated for possible incorporation into the tuition of beginners. The qualities of a profound organist, the unique characteristics of the organ and its impact on organ technique and performance, as well as their views on posture and position at the organ, the important role of touch and articulation in the definition of musical ideas, and the complexities of fingering and pedalling in organ playing, were highlighted.

The writings of five piano pedagogues, published over a period of thirty years from 1977 to 2006, were consulted to investigate the principles on which piano tuition is founded. The investigation confirmed that piano pedagogy has integrated comprehensive music teaching with instrumental teaching for many years, continuously aiming to address areas that could be improved, evaluating its validity in changing times, and keeping abreast of the discourse in education and performance practice. This evolutionary trend in piano pedagogy is particularly evident in the cognisance taken of the development in psychology, educational psychology and neuroscience, as applicable to music education.

Four widely used beginners' methods for learners with keyboard proficiency, published between

1953 and 2000, were then scrutinised: the methods of Peeters, Gleason, Marsden Thomas, and Ritchie and Stauffer. They proved to be comprehensive in terms of technical aspects and organ-specific style aspects. As far as general musical aspects are concerned, they seem reliant on piano tuition.

The published methods available for organ beginners without keyboard proficiency were analysed to establish the effectiveness of beginners' methods for such beginners. The four methods studied were identified as suitable for such students, and were evaluated to determine whether these courses are comprehensive in their approaches to the development of a sound keyboard and organ technique, as well as other skills required by instrumental music. The research confirmed that these organ methods each has its value and specific profile and that they would serve appropriately. However, each also has its own deficiencies. It is evident that each method requires the teacher to still play a significant role in the learning process of the beginner, while continuously assessing the progress of each individual learner and having a broad understanding of available sources and methods that might be needed to supplement the learning process.

It became clear during the study of methods that the factor paramount to teaching a beginner successfully is the teacher's understanding of the requirements of the individual learner. The decision to learn to play an instrument with such unique qualities as the organ may arise from different motives - therefore an organ beginner may have one of many possible profiles. The teacher should have a broad outlook on learning and teaching strategies, as well as a variety of methods to address certain inadequacies or paucities in methods as they arise in the teaching process of individual learners.

Available beginners' courses designed to develop musicianship and organ technique concurrently, in other words comprehensive music tuition, are seemingly limited. Of the available methods studied in this investigation, only the methods of Ingelse and Suzuki might be suitable for younger beginners, with the methods of Sanger and Deis in principle addressing all the necessary aspects of organ tuition, but in a way that presupposes either musical experience or well-developed cognitive skills.

The limited number of methods suitable for beginners of various profiles might be a result of organ pedagogy relying on piano pedagogy to provide students with basic keyboard skills, and concurrently with that well-developed general musicianship skills, to start with organ tuition. Although this phenomenon - that most organ beginners come from a piano background - is realistic and might remain so, this study underlined that a prospective learner with limited or no keyboard skills who wishes to start with organ tuition and the teacher who is willing to take up the challenge, is faced with the dilemma of limited resources. The field of organ pedagogy may benefit from acknowledging that it is possible to begin keyboard tuition on the organ; but also that the planning and design of the teaching process entail the incorporation of psychological and educational principles and a broader outlook on the development of musical skills and musicianship.

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