

## Technical Regime:

Musicians use their entire being to play the piano:

1. Body
2. Mind
3. Spirit

Although playing a musical instrument well has always focused on building the necessary technique to accomplish musical goals, it is only in recent years that we have begun thinking about musicians as athletes.

It is important to cultivate a holistic approach to technique and include regimes and practices which foster the necessary skills but also help us look after our bodies. It is really easy to injure oneself as an athlete. Since musicians are athletes, musicians also risk injury. I do not know a great musician who hasn't had an injury. Some injuries keep musicians off the road and in recovery for extensive periods of time.

Here is a proposed plan for managing one's body as a musician:

1. Get plenty of rest and do not play when fatigued. It is really easy to injure oneself when fatigued.
2. Warm up and warm down with isometric body exercises including large muscle groups and small ones. We play music with our whole body and not just arms and hands.
3. Take breaks and plan them. Use a timer if necessary to avoid over-playing. A recommended time frame for a break is after 20 minutes of practice.
4. Hydrate. We need to drink plenty of fluids for our bodies to work well. Include plenty of water.
5. At the first sign of pain, cease practicing and take a break. If the pain persists, take a few days or a week to rest the body. Seek professional input from a doctor, physiotherapist or chiropractor to assess the challenge.
6. If you are carrying a lot of stress from the day, be sure to play slowly at first and do a lot of deep breathing to relax muscles. I recommend mindfulness training or meditation to get centered before you begin.
7. Never practice in a "panic" mode. Stressing about a deadline will impede learning and also cause a lot of tension in your body. The result could easily be an injury.

Building a strong piano technique:

Here are areas to explore as part of your technical regime and technical development:

1. Isometric and Isotonic exercises
2. Conservatory Technique: scales, chords, arpeggios, octaves etc.
3. Advanced technical methods: Hanon, Pischna, Cortot, Philipp, Dohnanyi, Liszt etc.

4. Academic Etudes: Czerny, Cramer, Mozkowski etc.
5. Artist Etudes: Chopin, Liszt, Debussy etc.
6. Passages from the literature: i.e.: Last movement of Chopin Sonata No.2

Remember that technique is a means to an end. We should always practice technique with feeling and musicality and never mechanically. One could argue that a technical regime focused on the physical ability is dangerous. Remember that we play with our whole being. Never disconnect the mind or the spirit when practicing technical development materials.

#### Technical Methods:

In some ways, these have gone out of fashion. I believe they have some value. One should avoid doing complete methods and focus on exercises that will benefit each individual student.

Here are a few I recommend looking at:

1. Hanon: complete 60 Exercises
2. Liszt: Technical Exercises
3. Alfred Cortot: Rational Principles of Pianoforte Technique
4. The Leschetizky Method
5. Philipp: Exercises for the Independence of the Fingers and Exercices de Tenues
6. Tobias Matthay: Muscular Relaxation Studies
7. Kullak: The School of Octave-Playing
8. Jonas: Master School of Virtuoso Piano Playing
9. Moszkowski: School of Double Notes