Laban Movement in Piano: An Introductory Guide to Incorporating Laban Choral Conducting Gestures into Piano Performance and Pedagogy

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Abstract

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Rudolf von Laban was a pioneering movement theorist, deeply interested in the expression of human movement. His teachings have been adapted by James Jordan and Giselle Wyers for expressive choral conducting. Pianists, both performers, and educators, have long emphasized expressive playing as an essential element of piano performance and instruction. This dissertation investigates how Laban's concepts, along with the choral movements developed by Jordan and Wyers, can be applied to piano performance and teaching to teach expressive movements from the outset of the learning process.

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1. Introduction

The art of the performance is an opportunity for individuals to demonstrate their artistic talents while conveying emotions. Whether it is music, dance, or some other form of performance, each unique artist has a story to share, with distinct expressions and emotions that come with it. Music and dance are two worlds where "they appeal to the imagination of others. They are poetry without words."[1] Colwyn Trevarthen notes, "Music communicates the mind's essential *coherence of purpose*, a willfulness that holds its elements in a narrative form through phenomenal, experienced, time."[2]

Beginning piano lessons are a time for new students to learn new musical concepts and the experience and joy of performing. The focus of the lessons is on theory and reading musical notation, as well as technical training in piano playing. However, emphasis on technical skill may sometimes cause less attention to the emotional and expressive aspects of music and piano playing. Piano pedagogue Seymour Bernstein in his *20 Lessons in Keyboard Choreography*, says regarding piano practice, "Being conscious of your feelings and making a physical connection not them ought to be your chief concern during every moment of your practicing."[3] Bernstein's approach acknowledges that emotion/expression should be accounted for in one's practice to enhance performance.

Movement has become an essential tool in general music classes within the scope of general music pedagogical approaches. Reviewing multiple musical methods for music classes, David G. Woods found that movement was at the forefront for early music learning, including

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[1] Colwyn Trevarthen, Jonathan Delafield-Butt, and Benjamin Schögler, "Psychobiology of Musical Gesture: Innate Rhythm, Harmony, and Melody in Movements of Narration," In *New Perspectives on Music and Gesture*, ed. Anthony Gritten and Elaine King (New York: Routledge, 2016), 12.

[2] Ibid, 13.

[3] Seymour Bernstein, *20 Lessons in Keyboard Choreography: The Basics of Physical Movement at the Piano* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leondard Publishing Company, 1991), xiv.

methods by Orr-Schulwerk, the Kodály method, and Music Learning Theory.[4] Focused examination of piano pedagogy approaches also include the methods mentioned above as essential tools for musical development.[5] Looking at the Dalcroze method, their teaching allows the "awakening within the student awareness…music as experienced, was thus encouraged in the art of improvisation, learning to express at the keyboard what had already been expressed through bodily movement."[6] However, in my own experiences as a young piano student, I have no vivid memories of movement-based learning being incorporated into the piano lessons. Examining current beginning piano method books, such as the Bastien Piano Series, movement-based approaches are not a featured part of the learning. Reflecting on this, I wonder whether incorporating such an approach could lead to more expressive playing experiences from the outset.

A common sentiment when talking with colleagues regarding beginning students is that some students have the promise of technical mastery in playing, but lack the emotional and expressive nature to communicate such ideas. With other students, the opposite is happening with lots of emotional and expressive playing, but a lack of technical foundation and improvement. I contend whether an approach that combines both concepts together could be developed to help piano teachers facilitate proper piano technique and expressive and communicative piano playing. Pianist and Pedagogue Heinrich Neuhaus states that "work on the artistic image begins in the very first stages of studying music and learning to play an instrument."[7]

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[4] David Woods, "Movement and General Music: Perfect Partners," *Music Educators Journal* 74, no. 3 (1987) 36, 41-42, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3397939.

[5] Marienne Uszler, Stewart Gordon, and Elyse Mach, *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1991), 76-86.

[6] Ibid, 77.

[7] Heinrich Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, trans K.A. Leibovitch, (London: Barrie & Jenkin Ltd, 1973), 9.

Developing a standard language for teachers would be beneficial for multiple reasons. It would allow this type of method to be helpful for all ages of students, whether the student is at a young age where the individual is still gaining life experiences and memories, or an older beginning student that can tap into memories and experiences to help shape their expressive playing. Additionally, this language can be used with a more advanced student to help refine and focus what they are trying to communicate expressively through gesture and technique.

Choral conductors provide an excellent example of using gestures to convey expressions and emotions to a group based on the music being performed. James Jordan and Giselle Wyers have developed a choral conducting pedagogy for aspiring conductors by studying Rudolf Laban's movement language. This application enables choral conductors to "develop a gestural vocabulary that has the power to express emotions and elucidate ideas."[8] Although this methodology is designed for choral conducting, I believe there is enough evidence for the scholarship to be translatable to piano performance and pedagogy. As music performance is a means of communicating with the audience, performers should have as many tools as possible to convey their intended expression, including a framework for expressive gestures.

This dissertation aims to explore expressive gestures in piano performance and pedagogy from both the performer and audience perspectives, through a thorough examination of available scholarship. The analysis will focus on a style of expressive gesture by examining Jordan's and Wyers' work on expressive choral conducting and applying Laban's movement theories. The final goal is to adapt their work to piano pedagogy practice. This piano pedagogy practice can be applied to piano students of all ages and levels and serve as a guide for performers to help map their gestures to reflect the expressive communication they wish their audience to experience.

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[8] James Jordan, *The Conductor's Gesture: A Practical Application of Rudolf von Laban's Movement Language*, (Chicago: GIA Publications Inc., 2011), xv.

The discussion will draw on examples and excerpts from the piano repertoire to illustrate how the gestures can be analyzed through a pianistic lens. This guide aims to introduce pianists to the ideas of Laban and movement and encourage them to link and reflect on the concept of expressive gesture.

2. Expressive Gesture and Mirror Neurons

Expressive Gestures:

Gestural movements are considered tools of expression. They can communicate information expressing mental states, feelings, moods, affects, and emotional intentions.[9] Outside of communication, including the help of expression in dialogue and sign language, gesture has been used in performance. Gestures can be seen in various venues and mediums of performance. For example, live art performances are a medium where gestures are critical. Below is a review of literature that examines expressive gesture and how it works in various mediums, including dance and mime. Specifically, I will explore how gesture, particularly expressive gesture, interacts with music, including performance and pedagogy.

In exploring aspects of communication, gestures play a fundamental role in the dialogue between two or more people. The gesture can enhance the meaning of the communication. Reflecting on today's society, we lose some meaning when communicating, because text and email are two primary forms of communication. For example, when I receive a text message, I might read the words of the message one way, but not understand the fulling meaning of the text, because of the lack of gesture that comes with electronic communication. Gesture plays a critical role in sign language, serving as the primary form of communication for individuals who are hearing impaired. As Jensenius et al. look at gesture, they see it as both movement and meaning. Movement is the physical displacement of an object in space.[10] They define meaning as the

[9] Antonio Camurri and Thomas B. Moeslund, "Visual Gesture Recognition: From Motion Tracking to Expressive Gesture," in *Musical Gestures: Sound, Movement, and Meaning*, ed. Rolf Inge Godøy and Marc Leman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 253.

[10] Alexander Refsum Jensenius et al., "Musical Gestures: Concepts and Methods in Research," in *Musical Gestures: Sound, Movement, and Meaning*, ed. Rolf Inge Godøy and Marc Leman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 13.

mental activation of an experience.[11] This definition allows us to understand how gesture can relate to performance, particularly music.

The mime, as a performer, only has their expressions and gestures as tools to convey ideas, emotions, and scenes. Joan Lawson puts it best when she writes that the art of being a mime "is telling a story, expressing a mood or an emotion or describing an action – without resorting to words."[12] Lawson notes multiple forms where the identity of the mime can be found, including the role of an actor and dancer, and also in ballet.[13] Breaking down the types of gestures that can be studied, Lawson sees three categories: there are natural emotional expressions, occupational gestures, and conventional gestures. Natural emotional expression, which Lawson considers to be the most difficult to practice, is where the artist creates the impression that they are behaving like they are in real life.[14] The artist must know their body regarding stresses, strains, and relaxations and why movements occur.[15] Occupational gestures are movements made by people at work and at play.[16] It is also about different studies of people and occupations, and the mime must capture other people's characterizations.[17] Conventional gestures are natural and familiar gestures. They can be in place of speech and are narrative, descriptive, and emotional.[18] As I work with music and sound, it is interesting to study the art of mime because of the unique interaction between gesture and expression, but without sound. Given that sound is absent, the gestures and the expressive nature of those gestures are elevated to the forefront for the audience to perceive. The human hands allow the gift of mimetic ability,

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[11] Ibid

[12] Joan Lawson, *Mime: The Theory and Practice of Expressive Gesture*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons Ltd., 1957), vii.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid, viii.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

showing and delivering messages just like the voice.[19] In the article by Edward Nye, focusing on the mime artist Jean-Gaspard Deburau, he states that "a mime succeeds or fails [will] depend on the quality of his physical expressiveness."[20] Deburau was seen as a notable figure from the mime community for his "expressive muteness," which was seen as an artistic choice and less of a feeling of "obligation."[21] Deburau took the act of being a mime to true artistry, influencing future mimes, including Marcel Marceau.[22]

In the performative world, dance and choreography are obvious examples of expressive gestures. Seymour Bernstein notes, "choreography has always been associated with dance…[it] is the art of representing dance movements utilizing a special kind of notation."[23] The study by Camurri et al. tried to analyze three aspects of dancers and their gestures.[24] The first part of the study was to examine which motions, cues, and gestures were used by the dancers to express emotions and expressions to the audience during a performance.[25] The next part measured and classified those gestures into basic emotions.[26] Finally, they analyzed how the audience perceived those gestures and if they could connect them to certain feelings and expressions.[27] This study looked at four emotions: anger, happiness, joy, and fear.[28] The results found that while audiences could, to some degree, identify these emotions, grief was more accurately identified by audiences than compared to the other three emotions.[29] Planning your movements

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[19] Trevarthen, Delafield-Butt, and Schögler, 12.

[20] Edward Nye, "The Romatic Myth of Jean-Gaspard Deburau," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, no. 1/2 (2015): 47, doi:10.1353/ncf.2015.0016.

[21] Nye, 48.

[22] Nye, 46.

[23] Bernstein, xiii.

[24] Camurri and Moeslund, 253-254.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid, 254.

[29] Ibid.

takes a precision-like aspect to have your gestures executed the way you want. They help enhance the emotional and expressive nature of the music to allow the performer to communicate expressively with their audience.

Similarly, pianists plan how certain gestures can be used based in conjunction with musical notation, including slurs, staccatos, and rests.[30] These plans can lead to various horizontal, vertical, and rotational movement combinations.[31] However, while this precision of planning takes place and is necessary, it raises the question of whether the audience does recognize the intent or emotions of the movements based on the gestures. This is relevant for pianists, as Bernstein states:

> Being conscious of your feelings and making a physical connection to them ought to be your chief concern during every movement of your practicing. Only then will the sounds emanating from your instrument match, if not closely approximate, your responses to music. It is in this way your musical feelings will be communicated to others.[32]

When considering music, the obvious gestures that come to mind are those of a conductor leading a large ensemble such as a symphony orchestra or a sizeable symphonic choir. The conductor uses gestures to communicate with other musicians in real-time performances, using the entire body to communicate, including hands and face. Examples include a flick of the hand with eye contact to initiate a breath, the entrance, or the release of a pregnant pause in the music. While primarily used for communication within a group, these gestures also offer clues to the audience, allowing them to process and infer any expressions and emotions the conductor is trying to create with the ensemble. In addition, it will enable the audience to focus on specific

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Bernstein, xiv.

areas of the group with large ensembles, their attention being magnified to a particular individual or group.

Another form of gestural communication in music is observed in the chamber group, a smaller, more intimate ensemble. When groups of musicians like this come together to perform, the slightest movement of a bow, a head bob, or even the movement of a torso allows the other musicians to know and communicate without verbal exchange. Similar to a dancer pre-planning the choreography, much of the planning between musicians will be addressed beforehand in practice and rehearsal. But there is still gestural communication for expression that happens in the moment. An example could be the release of the final note and when the musicians feel it is right to finish. Again, the audience can perceive some of these gestures and make their inferences, taking cues on some of the expressions and emotions the musicians are trying to express.

Taking the focus one step further, what does gesture look like between the solo performer and the audience? This type of interaction can also be interpreted as a form of communication between the pianist and the audience. During a piano recital, a common refrain from the audience is, "I want to be able to see their hands." They want to see the theatrics of the fingers and hands moving across the keyboard. The way a pianist moves the hands can be seen as expressive movements and gestures to make the music come alive. It allows the audience, no matter where they sit, to perceive and try to understand the emotional and expressive music and meaning the pianist is conveying.[33] There are times, though, when a listener's view may be too obstructed to fully capture the experience and emotion the performer is giving.[34] Hence, the audience's ability to see certain gestures or expressions, including facial expressions, may be

[33] Cammuri and Moeslund, 238.
[34] Ibid.

critical. It only allows particular emotional intentions to be communicated to audiences by gesture or expression.[35] Visual evidence is essential for identifying expressive communication. It has been found that even if the sound is taken away, observers can still identify emotions and expressions from the musician.[36] One of the reasons the audience must observe the gestures of the pianist is that it allows for a relationship to be had with the audience. The pianist can present a musical narrative and show their temperament and who they are as a pianist and person to the audience.

Communicative gestures are not the only type of gesture found in music performance. There are sound-producing gestures, which are those that give birth to the note. An example would be a finger striking a piano key and the sound being produced. The pianist will plan and practice with the music how the sound or "touch quality" will be, based on articulation and sound level, which the performer must control.[37] Dahl notes that posture is critical for the pianist. This includes relaxed shoulders and arms with the elbows near a 90-degree angle when the hand is on the key. The shoulders are uninvolved and are "liquid," so to speak, during the music-making. In the photograph below, it shows proper head and spine alignment, keeping the shoulders down with the sternum up.[38]

[35] Dahl et al., "Gestures in Performance," *in Musical Gestures: Sound, Movement, and Meaning*, ed. Rolf Inge Godøy and Marc Leman, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 50.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Dahl et al., 42.

[38] Nicholas Tagab, *Pianist Body Position*, April 12, 2023, iPhone Camera, Seattle.

Figure 1: Nicholas Tagab, Pianist Body Posture.

Posture is critical to address because tension within piano playing can happen very easily, related to improper practicing, inefficient use of the body, and poor body posture. Piano teachers and pianists should always be attuned to their bodies and know that forced tension while playing

is not constructive, and can lead to long-term damage. One form of training to be aware of is the Alexander Technique, which seeks to eliminate tension in piano playing, as well as other art forms, including drama. In a study by Ying, Evens et al. found that when pianists used Alexander Technique as part of their training in piano performance, it led to a positive outcome of reducing tension.[39]

While it is noted that expert pianists prefer economically planned movements to save energy, such actions are not always ideal when trying to play expressively.[40] Because of the piano's mechanisms, once the key has been depressed, the sound occurs, but as soon as the key is released, the sound immediately stops. The release of the key is a more economical movement/gesture than any lifting of the hands and arms. But as stated above, if an expressive release is needed, then the pianist may choose to use more body release for a sort of emphasis as an ending. Both approaches are topics that pianists have debated. One school of thought believes that containing movement, keeping the motions internal, including facial expressions, better allows the expression to come through the music.[41] Another group believes that expressive gestures and movements enable the pianist to obtain a better sound. Alternatively, a third group believes a mix of both schools of thought may be the best, as personal choices will be unique for each pianist for how they want their intentions expressed and received.[42]

Sound-facilitating gestures can help with the performance, but they do not produce sound and are not necessarily communicative. Dahl highlights that these types of gestures are difficult to identify as they are seen as overlapping with sound-producing and communicative gestures.[43]

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[39] Ying et al, "Tension Release in Piano Playing: Teaching Alexander Technique to Undergraduate Piano Majors," *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences* 14, (2015): 2413. Doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.910.

[40] Dahl et al., 61.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid, 53.

In one study by Dahl and others, they examined how specific body movements during a piano performance might actually help express the musical structure of playing technically demanding passages.[44] For example, they noticed that a pianist will sometimes shake their head very fast, which is meant to help the tempo.[45] Pianists can express the character of the melody of the piece by moving their torso and shoulders, as well as perhaps involving their eyebrows.[46] Depending on the action, the movements would be associated with arpeggios, playing low or high registers of the piano, hands going back and forth, as well as grace notes.[47] Other examples looked at how certain body movements affected harmony, timbre, sound level, and rhythm.[48]

These types of movements are expressive, but do not directly relate to the hands or arms, but rather to the torso and facial expressions/movements. This includes eyes, eyebrows, lips, and the entire head. Body sways can also be included in this gesture category, as well as tapping or rocking motions, as they help stabilize and support the pianist and control the pulse[49] It should be noted that while pianists may utilize these types of movements/gestures, they can also be negative, as they can be seen as distracting to an audience and to the performer.

Another type of gesture in music performance that Dahl identifies is that of sound-accompanying gestures made in response to sound.[50] The first type of gesture that comes to mind is dance, as it is a response type of movement from the sound. Dahl states that dance is its own art form with a wide range of gestures with their own meanings for expression. The dancer will focus on conscious and unconscious synchronization and interaction in performance with the

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid, 57.
[50] Ibid, 36.

sound.[51] It should be noted that while some gestures may have a primary intention, they may also have a secondary intention, i.e., a gesture intended for sound production may also convey cues for observers and other performers, such as the chamber ensemble.[52]

Exploration will now look at how expressive gesture affects music and why it is important to discuss in terms of both performance and pedagogy. The human body serves as a mediator between music, the musical mind, and the physical environment of the body.[53] Leman states, "Action-based approach to elementary gestures is rather common in music teaching."[54] In my experience, gesture has been used to help young students with early instruction, mainly how to move fingers that are economically best so as not to waste movement and energy while also being musically relevant to the music. This process allows students to master the physical piano playing more quickly. Still, instruction in the emotional aspect of music performance can sometimes be set aside to perfect technique. Currently, gesture has been studied in a piano-pedagogical manner regarding communication. A study by Simones, Rodger, and Schroeder examined the relationships between intentions and gestures produced while teaching, and how those gestures worked with students of different levels and ages.[55] Specifically, they asked: "1) What gestures are performed by piano teachers while teaching piano to different student levels? 2) What differences and similarities can be found in teachers' combined and individual gestural approaches while teaching piano to different levels of student proficiency?"[56] In this study, they decided to categorize and study two types of gestures: spontaneous co-verbal and spontaneous

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[51] Ibid, 59.

[52] Jensenius et al., 30.

[53] Marc Leman, "Music, Gesture, and the Formation of Embodied Meaning," in *Musical Gestures: Sound, Movement, and Meaning*, ed. Rolf Inge Godøy and Marc Leman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 127.

[54] Leman, 139.

[55] Lilian Lima Simones, Matthew Rodger, and Franziska Schroeder, "Communication Musical Knowledge Through Gesture: Piano Teachers' Gestural Behaviors Across Different Levels of Student Proficiency," *Pyschology of Music Teachers* 43, no. 5 (2015): 723, doi:10.1177/0305735614535830.

[56] Ibid, 725.

co-musical gestures.[57] They break these two types of gestures into further groups. They divide co-verbal gestures into: "deictic (pointing gestures), iconic (to express images of objects or actions), metaphoric (to express images of the abstract), and co-verbal beats (up-and-down movements of hand, arms or head)."[58] The authors split co-musical gestures into five categories, which include:

> musical beats (up and down movements of hands, arms and or head denoting the speed or tempo intended for performance without providing expressive musical information), conducting style gesture (up and down movements of hands and arms that assume in general a rounder shape and provide both temporal and expressive information about the music), piano playing gestures (refers to instances where teachers are actively engaged with music making for the purposes of demonstrating and modeling), mimic (refers to gestures used by the teacher in the course of a gestural demonstration intended at showing students how to perform a particular musical sound-producing action while expecting the student to imitate the gesture shown), and touch (instances where teachers established physical contact with the student while teaching, such as touching the students' hands, wrists, or arms.).[59]

At the start of this review, the importance of expressive gestures in music performance and pedagogy was established. Specifically, the dissertation will focus on conducting style gestures as they provide emotional and expressive information for music-making. The results from the Simones, Rodger, and Schroeder study found that the most frequently used gestures for teaching in both student groups were deictic and piano playing gestures.[60] In further diving into the results, deictic gestures were important for markings within the score and relating them to the experience of music making, both as a motive for and result of each action.[61] It also showed that as students grew older and more experienced, teachers would use metaphoric and iconic gestures

[57] Ibid, 726.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid,. 726-727.
[60] Ibid, 727.
[61] Ibid, 730.

more because of an increased focus on musical-conceptual knowledge, working towards understanding the activity meaningfully for the students.[62] Studying the results of the conducting style gestures, they found that it was associated with singing, teaching for expression, phrasing, and tempo consistency. They found that because of this type of gesture, the teacher's intentions are "adapted towards higher-order musical elements in teaching more advanced students."[63] The question and discussion then becomes how teachers can find a way to utilize conducting gestures in their piano teaching for early and beginning learners, so that they can inject some expressive and emotional instruction and playing into their learning from an earlier stage in the learning process. The researchers also questioned why this type of gesture was not used more by the teachers they studied, and found that the teachers considered the students in the early stage of learning to be unready to address expressivity.[64] It has been shown that instrumental teachers with early-stage learning students focus more on technique than expressivity.[65] I believe that expression and expressive teaching and communication can and should be utilized in all stages of piano teaching for any age and level of the student, not just reserved for more advanced students. In the same study, the authors found a positive relationship between the use of gestures and piano learning and that teachers are actively deciding how to use gestures based on the proficiency and level of their students.[66] In the following chapters, the dissertation examines how piano teachers can look at choral conducting and the adaptation of an expressive movement-based analysis, and how it can be applied to piano pedagogy and performance.

Mirror Neurons:

[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid, 732.

When discussing the intersection of physical gestures, emotion, and expression, it is crucial to consider the role of mirror neurons. Mirror neurons are the cells in the brain that allow an individual to understand the actions of someone else doing the action or ability.[67] The observer's brain activates to help the observer process that action to potentially do it themselves.[68] Mirror neurons are a mechanism that allows a person to understand the intention and meaning of communication signals that happen with gestures.[69] An example would be the student watching the piano teacher demonstrate a certain technique. The mirror neurons in the brain would be registering the action, allowing the student to try to understand and mimic the action. Because of this, certain aspects of the brain can understand music cognition and the ability to understand and attain performance-level musical skills.[70] It shows that mirror neurons are engaged during observation and imitation and are essential in multiple gesture-related situations. But even more, mirror neurons can understand the gestures and help trigger and awaken emotions and retrigger the experiences and memories of the observer.[71]

Mirror neurons have been extensively studied in multiple dimensions, including how they can interact with piano performance and the reaction process for musicians and non-musicians. In the study on how musicians and non-musicians responded to piano performances, Hou et al. wanted to know how the brain cells, specifically the mirror neurons, were activated with two types of performances.[72] The first type of performance was what they deemed as the *correct*

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[67] Kevin A. Mazurek and Marc H. Schieber, "Music and Mirror Neurons: From Motion to 'E'Motion," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 1, no. 3 (2006): 2630, doi:10.1152/jn.00653.2019.; Hou et al., "Mirror Neuron Activation of Musicians and Non-Musicians in Response to Motion Captured Piano Performances," *Brain Cognition* 115, (2015): 47, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bandc.2017.04.001.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Itsvan Molnar-Szakacs and Katie Overy, "Music and Mirror Neurons: From Motion to 'E'Motion," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 1, no. 3 (2006): 235, doi:10.1093/scan/nsl1029.

[70] Hou et al., 47.

[71] Molnar-Szakacs and Overy, 235.

[72] Hou et al., 47.

*mod*e, in which they saw the performer emphasizing the playing of the piece with as technically correct playing as possible.[73] The other type of performance was the *enjoyment performance*, where the performer is told to "simply" enjoy the performance and enjoy themselves.[74] The investigation results were interesting in that the audience members who were musicians had more activated mirror neurons than the non-musician members.[75] And when it came to the *enjoyment performances*, while both types of audience members had some mirror neurons activated, it was shown to be more activated with the musicians because they could see themselves performing those pieces that way.[76] This is important to note, particularly for a piano pedagogue, because when teachers demonstrate, they should show correct piano playing. Still, they need to do it engagingly. Their students, as musicians, will be more likely to have their mirror neurons engaged in trying to emulate the gestures. It will be critical for the teacher to understand that one needs to have every demonstration be that of an enjoyable type of playing so that the student's mirror neurons will be more likely to be engaged to help with their learning. James Jordan notes that conductors need to study their scores and examine their movements so that when they work with their groups, the delivery system is ready to fire the mirror neurons of others with their gestures.[77] This also applies to piano teachers, who should be familiar with their students' scores to make their own demonstrations more effective. Mirror neurons are essential in understanding the relationship between physical gestures and emotions and their significance in the learning process, particularly in music.

Summary:

[73] Ibid, 48.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid, 50.
[76] Ibid, 50, 53.
[77] Jordan, 112-113.

The literature review summarizes the multiple ways in which gesture interacts with music. This encompasses its use in performance-related movements, as well as its role as a form of communication. Furthermore, researchers have found that gesture is closely connected to performers and their audiences, with the latter being able to discern intentions and emotions conveyed by musicians' gestures. Recent studies have also explored the potential benefits of incorporating gesture into piano pedagogy, highlighting its usefulness as a teaching tool. This information is particularly relevant for those interested in bridging the gap between Laban choral conducting gestures and piano pedagogy.

3. Laban - Jordan's and Wyers' Interpretation of Laban

Choral conductors and pianists always want to reach their full potential. According to Eugene Migliaro Corporon, concerning full potential, "we have to become comfortable with our ability to elegantly and naturally portray sound in time through movement."[78] Corporon continues, "the essential focus of conducting should be on connecting and communicating with people."[79] The quotes resonate from the perspective of a pianist. Although pianists are not using their hands to communicate with others to make sound, they use gestures in their own way to connect with their audience, and to communicate their expressions and emotions. James Jordan, a choral conductor and educator, has developed a style of choral conducting that utilizes Rudolf Laban's theories and ideas in an application for expressive choral conducting. Laban movements have also been studied and utilized by instrumental conductors as well. In this discussion, I have predominantly sourced Jordan for information regarding Laban and his theories and studies on movement, as well as choral conducting, but other sources were utilized including scholarship by Lisa Billingham. In the text *The Conductor's* Gesture, by James Jordan, there is a chapter by Giselle Wyers, "Portal to Expressivity: Laban's States and Drives for Conductors." Wyers provides significant information on Laban's states and drives and how they are viewed from the conductor's lens and will be utilized significantly. By studying and using Laban's techniques and ideas, Jordan has codified a conducting technique that seeks to enhance the communicative power of choral music and create meaningful connections between performers and the audience.

Rudolf von Laban, born in Hungary in 1879, is renowned as a dance theorist, teacher, and writer, who explicitly focused on humanistic movements and motions.[80] Laban had an approach

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[78] Jordan, xv.
[79] Ibid, xviii.
[80] Ibid, 52.; T. Editors of Encylopaedia Britannica, "Rudolf Laban," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 11, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rudolf-Laban.

to understanding the physical and mental effort in many subjects, including art and dance, focusing on observing movement and visualizing patterns in space.[81] During Laban's childhood, he traveled frequently with his father due to his father's Austro-Hungarian military career.[82] Because of these travels, he became interested in diverse cultures, including Africa and China.[83] Lisa Billingham notes that it was not just dance that generated Laban's initial interest in human movement, but that because of the travel, he witnessed multiple types of rituals that affected him deeply.[84] This included observations of military ceremonial displays through movement, which intrigued him.[85] He himself also attended Military academy after his schooling, though he found a military career was not made for him.[86] Laban helped establish multiple dance groups and schools in many cities, such as Munich and Manchester, providing education in the art of movement up to his death in 1958.[87] His works and ideas have been applied in many areas: personality assessment, dance therapy, educational dance, mime, child development, disability education, and music therapy.[88]

To fully understand the visions of choral conducting gestures that incorporate Laban's works and theories, it is necessary to have a deeper understanding of Laban's work. In reading Laban's writings, Jordan identifies that Laban consistently combines the body and the mind, that movement "combines phenomenological experience with a highly specialized kinesthetic

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[81] Britannica.
[82] Lisa A. Billingham, *The Complete Conductor's Guide to Laban Movement Theory*, Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2009, 1.
[83] Jordan, 52.; Billingham 1.
[84] Billingham 1.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Evelyn Doer, *Rudolf Laban: The Dancer of the Crystal*, Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2008, 7.
[87] Jordan, 52.
[88] Jordan, 53.

perception for self and environment. Movement is the link between the two worlds."[89] Carol-Lynne Moore says of Kinesthesis,

> (the 'muscle sense' or 'sixth sense') is defined as the sensual discrimination of the positions and movement of body parts based on information other than visual, auditory, or verbal. Kinesthetic perception involves judging changes in muscle tension, body position, and the relative placement of body parts…Without any difficulty we know where the body is, and where it is going, at any movement, with eyes shut.[90]

Body movement is a complex phenomenon that involves multiple changes which occur simultaneously.[91] The basis for Laban's theory related to body movement, which he thinks of as "movement thinking," is seen as an "acquisition and perceptual storage of movements and their uses, even though a 'nomenclature' is lacking."[92] This allows a person to imagine and sense the kinesthetic sensations for certain body motions.[93] Jordan views these sensations as acquired through the movement of one's body because of observation of others, which helps the mover to feel the difference in these movements. For Laban, the result of the expenditure of energy is effort.[94]

Effort is the inner impulse from which movement originates; it is the mind/body combination of a mental image combined with a physical activity that manifests itself in a movement activity.[95] It represents one of the four core ideas of movement that Laban studied, along with body, shape, and space. This discussion focuses on effort as it looks at the subtle characteristics of movement and dynamics concerning the inner intention, which can encompass the movement's emotional and expressive elements.

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[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid, xxv.
[91] Ibid, 55.
[92] ibid
[93] Ibid, 56.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.

For Laban, effort can be broken down into movement variables: space, weight, time, and flow. As seen in the figure below, these elements have different fighting and indulging elements for each effort.[96]

Effort	Indulging Element	Fighting Element
Space	Indirect	Direct
Weight	Light	Strong
Time	Sustained	Sudden
Flow	Free	Bound

Figure 2: James Jordan, Effort Elements, Table Organized by Nicholas Tagab. Page 57.

Flow is seen as the dimension specified in terms of analyzing shapes of speed and energy curves, which relates to the rhythm of motion and pause phrases.[97] It is seen as the variation of the quality of bodily tension, which can be situated with the other effort elements. Flow is concerned with progression and continuity, and one can ask, "how?" Psychologically, flow can be associated with feelings.[98]

After understanding each of the concepts, the mover must know how to experience each of these efforts, looking at it from the conductor's lens and identifying what the movements might be like for the conductor. For flow, which relates to feeling and continuity, Wyers states that for the conductor and flow, the gestures happen between bound and free flow.[99] "Bound

[96] Ibid, 57.
[97] Camurri and Moeslund, 257.
[98] Wyers, 146-147.
[99] Ibid, 151.

flow is associated with the need to feel in control and is characterized by a quality withholding energy or resisting something or someone."[100] Bound flow forces the mover to contain energy within the body.[101] Some exercises could include threading a needle delicately, peeling an orange, withholding words in an argument, and choosing to be discreet.[102] Free flow allows the energy to flow through and out beyond the body. It is the "momentum unchecked in movement or emotion. It should feel simple, relaxed, and open as though you willingly yield to the gesture without care or concern."[103]

Weight is the element of movement that denotes the amount of tension and dynamics involved in the activity.[104] For Laban and Jordan, weight is the sensation of force or pressure exerted with movement. Weight has two contrasting aspects: lightness is delicate and soft, while strength is forceful and uses increased pressure.[105] Weight is concerned about the intention of the effort. The mover may ask "what" and sense weight from a bodily point of view.[106] Experiencing weight is about sensing, being aware of what is happening in your body, and with what emotional movement accompanies the intent. This leads to three types of weights a conductor can experience: light, passive, and strong.[107] Wyers notes that passive weight is less ideal because "the conductor is not actively engaging the muscles much and is not as aware of them."[108] For conductors and all movers, there are various ways to experience the feeling of weight. For example, strong weight, a pressure used by the muscles or actual physical weight of the body, can include picking up something heavy, pushing something heavy like a full grocery

[100] Ibid, 57.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Wyers, 157.
[104] Camurri and Moeslund, 257.
[105] Jordan, 58.
[106] Wyers, 146-147.
[107] Ibid, 149.
[108] Ibid.

cart, and digging a hole in the ground.[109] On the opposite end, with light weight, picking up an egg, petting a puppy or kitten, feeling soft fabric, allowing the sensation to happen without exerting force.[110]

The next element is time, which looks at the overall duration of time, tempo changes, and the underlying structure of rhythm and flow of the movement.[111] Time can also be seen as the duration within a movement, with sustained time as stretching, prolonging, and decelerating, while suddenness has a sense of urgency and quickness.[112] Additionally, time has to do with decision-making, commitment, and asking "when?"[113] Psychologically, time is about intuiting, working from instinct.[114] To experience time, movers and conductors need to understand that for Laban, time is about the quality of decisiveness, how the mover decides how to move, and whether it is a more sustained or quick movement.[115]

The final element of effort is space. Space is the dimension related to personal space concerning the body's center.[116] It is described as the energy focused in action, where indirectness is flexible and can be all-encompassing, contrasting with directness as channeled, singularly focused awareness of the environment.[117] When thinking about space, the mover should be concerned with attention and asking "where?" and should associate the psychological function of thinking.[118] When a mover/conductor is trying to experience space, they are thinking about the orientation of the world around them and are thinking and paying attention. Wyers

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[109] Ibid, 150.
[110] Ibid, 151.
[111] Camurri and Moeslund, 256.
[112] Jordan58.
[113] Wyers, 146.
[114] Ibid, 147.
[115] Ibid, 156.
[116] Camurri and Moeslund, 257.
[117] Jordan, 58.
[118] Wyers, 146-147.

notes that in traditional conducting curriculums, often direct space is prioritized to the detriment of exploring indirect space.[119] Direct space is associated with clarity both in thinking and in movement. While conducting is about cueing, focusing on articulation, and getting the ensemble's heightened attention.[120] An exercise to experience direct space would be intense concentration and focus on the clock in the back of a room to see how much time is left.[121] In contrast, indirect space is flexible, indulging, and of a wider focus. Movers and conductors can try moving freely across the room, waving their arms, panning a wide view with their eyes, and daydreaming.[122] There are also exercises where the conductor can experience both types of spaces, including swinging their head around to respond to a sound (indirect), and then keying on the sound with a visual focus (direct).[123]

To comprehend Laban's efforts, it is essential to understand how they combine to form various qualities of movement. Jordan notes that it is difficult to experience individual efforts independently, as Laban suggested, and that a mover is more likely to experience them through combinations.[124] When any two efforts are combined, Laban calls them states, which are considered present in any movement. For example, tapping on a window is seen as light in weight and quick in time.[125] Laban identified six states that can arise from the different combinations of efforts: dream (weight and flow), awake (space and time), remote (space and flow), rhythm (time and weight), mobile (time and flow), and stable (weight and space).[126]

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[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid, 154.
[121] Ibid, 154.
[122] Ibid, 154-155.
[123] Ibid, 155.
[124] Ibid,114.
[125] Ibid, 157.
[126] Ibid, 158.

Dream and awake states deal with awareness; remote and rhythm are associated with presence, location, and feel; mobile and stable can be linked to the actual movement.[127]

Laban also identified drives, which are combinations of three efforts. The *passion drive* contains weight, time, and flow while lacking space, and works on sensations.[128] Examples given with this drive include flamenco dancing, abandoning control of emotions, and daydreaming.[129] The next drive is the *vision drive*: space, flow, and time. The *vision drive* takes out the sensation of being in the body because weight is not featured and focuses on thinking and imagining based on the time with abandonment or restraint.[130] Then there is the *spell drive*, which has space, weight, and flow. *Spell drive* does include the element of time, just not as prevalent, because it does not change frequently, as in being spellbound or hypnotized.[131]

Action drive is the focus of this dissertation. The *action drive* contains space, time, and weight, with less focus on flow. Flow will be thought of as something neutral and less noticed. It is helpful for "executing specific movements requiring 'clear special attending, an intentional use of weight, and a good use of time,' where gradations of flow are not necessary or even ideal."[132] Although the *action drive* is considered a more fundamental drive because of the lack of flow, it is an excellent way for beginners venturing into the world of Laban to understand it better. It offers ideal archetypes for movement and is usually quite contrasting in nature, and easy for understanding. It is noted that action drives are like dance steps that allow a person to be aware of certain elements within the movement.[133] Wyers considers that the states and drives can be

[127] Ibid, 158-161.
[128] Ibid, 163.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid, 162.
[133] Ibid, 165.

valuable for score study and physical gestures for conductors in reflecting the music and in determining which efforts should be emphasized based upon the music.[134]

Within the *action drive*, eight actions are associated with it, and while Laban did not specifically give the names, they have grown from many Laban paragons who found the terms helpful and in tune with Laban's beliefs. Each action has space, weight, and time, and is either the indulging or fighting element. Below is a chart to display the eight action verbs with the qualities combined to make each action verb.[135]

Laban Action Verb	Float	Wring	Press	Glide	Slash	Punch	Flick	Dab
Qualities	Indirect Light Sustained	Indirect Strong Sustained	Direct Strong Sustained	Direct Light Sustained	Indirect Strong Quick	Direct Strong Quick	Indirect Light Quick	Direct Light Quick

Figure 3: Nicholas Tagab, Effort Elements in Combination, Organized 4/13/23, Based on Text from James Jordan. Page 115.

The first action is *Float*, which has indirect space, light weight, and sustained time. Some physical actions or memories associated with float include blowing bubbles, floating on your back in a pool, using a bubble wand, and tracing with a pencil.[136] *Wring* has indirect space, strong weight, and sustained time. Think of movements and memories like tightening a jar cap,

[134] Ibid, 165-166.
[135] Jordan, 115.
[136] Ibid, 116.

massaging a muscle, twisting a washcloth dry, and using a screwdriver.[137] *Press* has direct space, strong weight, and a sustained time. Think of massaging a body part, pushing a lawnmower, ironing a shirt, and going through a revolving door.[138]

Glide uses direct space, light weight, and sustained time. Movers can think of spreading butter and jelly on toast, throwing a paper airplane, and drawing a violin bow across one string.[139] When you have direct space, light weight, and quick time, movers will experience the action of *Dab*. Such movements include dotting an "I," knocking the ash off a cigarette, and typing.[140] *Flick* utilizes indirect space, light weight, with quick time. Think of turning a light switch on and off, shooing a fly, snapping your fingers, and striking a match.[141]

The action of *Slash* has indirect space, strong weight, and quick time. Memories and movements associated with slash include swinging a baseball bat, slamming a door, and tearing a piece of paper.[142] Lastly, with *Punch*, it has direct space, strong weight, and quick time. Think of plumping a pillow, boxing, hammering a nail, and pounding a fist on the table.[143]

As previously stated, expressive gestures stem from sound and movement memories that have already been experienced and acquired. The memories listed above for the eight action drives are examples cultivated to help movers experience and understand Laban action drives. As each person is unique and has individual experiences, different movement memories may be more important to help understand these drives. Pedagogues utilizing Laban's work should not feel restricted to any particular list or memory, but should instead be willing to coach and tap into the distinct experiences of those they teach. Jordan also states that these sixteen movement

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[137] Ibid, 117.
[138] Ibid, 118.
[139] Ibid, 119.
[140] Ibid, 120.
[141] Ibid, 121.
[142] Ibid, 122.
[143] Ibid, 123.

themes are central to Laban's pedagogical world.[144] The themes are excellent for "sequential conducting curriculum" learning for acquiring movement vocabulary, noting it should be studied repeatedly, not just once.[145] The themes provide a foundation for a "sequential study of gesture."[146] The first eight themes are termed basic themes, and the other eight are designated as advanced themes.

Basic Themes:

1. Themes concerned with the awareness of the body.
2. Themes concerned with the awareness of weight and time.
3. Themes concerned with the awareness of space.
4. Themes concerned with the awareness of the flow of the weight of the body in space and time.
5. Themes concerned with the adaptations to partners.
6. Themes concerned with the instrumental use of the limbs of the body.
7. Themes concerned with the awareness of isolated actions.
8. Themes concerned with occupational rhythms.

Advanced Themes:

1. Themes concerned with the shapes of movement.
2. Themes concerned with the combinations of the eight basic actions.
3. Themes concerned with space orientation.
4. Themes concerned with the performance of shapes and efforts by different parts of the body.
5. Themes concerned with the elevation from the ground.
6. Themes concerned with the awakening of group feelings.
7. Themes concerned with group formations.
8. Themes concerned with the expressive qualities or moods of movements. [147]

While some of the themes listed above are intended for conductors working with large group ensembles, a majority of the themes can be used by all musicians, including pianists. Jordan states,

> Laban's theories of movement can help conductors reacquaint themselves with their movement potential. Rhythm, which comes from a source within us, can be manifest as external movement. That external movement can be labeled to help us appreciate the

[144] Ibid, 248.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.

> infinite possibilities and experiences of rhythm manifest as movement. Rhythm is a manifestation of tension and release that provides point of reference commonly referred to as *meter*. Rhythm phrases, then, are movement manifestations of the efforts in combinations. But more importantly, a realization of the energy of the effort elements within us is actually a manifestation of color through rhythm.[148]

With an established foundation of Laban's ideas and principles about movement, gesture, and expressive gesture, the discussion will now examine how pianists and piano pedagogues can utilize the choral conducting gestures with Laban principles, and apply them to piano pedagogy used for expressive gestural playing.

[148] Ibid, 127.

4. Application of Laban Choral Conducting Gestures to Piano Performance and Pedagogy

The objective of this dissertation is to examine how James Jordan's and Giselle Wyers' adaptation of Laban's actions is utilized in sound-producing gestures, from choral conducting to piano performance. To achieve this, various video choral conducting demonstrations by student conductors, showcasing the different Laban actions and gestures to piano accompaniment will be analyzed and discussed. The videos studied are student conductors, both undergraduate and graduate students of the University of Washington, taking conducting classes with Giselle Wyers. I myself have taken the class and have experienced practicing the Laban gestures studied. The analysis will focus on the visual gestures and how the gestures impact the sound produced from their conducting. Then, the discussion will liken the gestures to piano performance, with a specific focus on advanced piano playing. Afterward, the overview will cover how piano teachers can introduce each of the gestures to new piano students and offer small musical examples with applications of how to teach the expressive gestures to the students. Many of the teaching examples are such that the teacher can demonstrate for the student, which the student can imitate. Utilizing the information on mirror neurons and using imitation teaching as a starting point will help the student process the visual information, allowing them to try the new gestures. Some of the examples will be composed from various teachers and method books. Finally, the discussion will provide some general insights for piano educators wanting to integrate Laban gestures in their teaching practice.

Dab:

Dab, in my opinion, may be one of the more accessible Laban action efforts for musicians to understand and assimilate. I believe it is a more accessible image to teach to piano

students. The elemental qualities of *Dab* include quick time, light weight, and direct space. Movement examples include typing on a keyboard with your fingers, poking someone's arm with a finger, and dotting an "I." Examining two video examples, both choral conducting students approach conducting this gesture with hands that are focused and direct, never letting the shapes of their hand change too much.[149] Both conductors have focus in terms of their beat and movement with the gestures, which seems to be, for the most part, very direct and even.[150] However, there are some differences between both videos, such as the brisker tempo and short quick gestures of conductor #1, which gives the feel of a light and brisk type of staccato conducting.[151] Conductor #2 has a more held-back speed with crisp light gestures that also give the staccato feel.[152]

Specific characteristics from the conducting video examples and the knowledge of *Dab* can be applied to piano performance and pedagogy. For instance, in Schumann's *Piano Sonata Op. 11*, in the first and fourth movements, short, even executions of staccato notes and chords are required. The following score examples show the number of staccato strikes in the piece, making it difficult because of the blistering speed the piece requires.[153]

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[149] Giselle Wyers, "Dab Video Example," directed by Giselle Wyers, July 22, 2013, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNUbAC-h_f0.; Giselle Wyers, "Dab Example 2," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoA4yf0K-mA.

[150] ibid

[151] Wyers, "Dab Video Example."

[152] Wyers, "Dab Example 2."

[153] Robert Schumann, *Piano Sonata in f-sharp minor*, ed. Ernst Herttrich, (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2009), 8, 30.

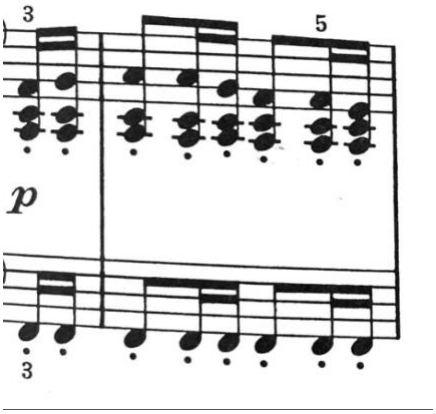

Figure 4: Robert Schumann, Paino Sonata f-sharp minor, Movement 2, measures 74-75, Page 4.

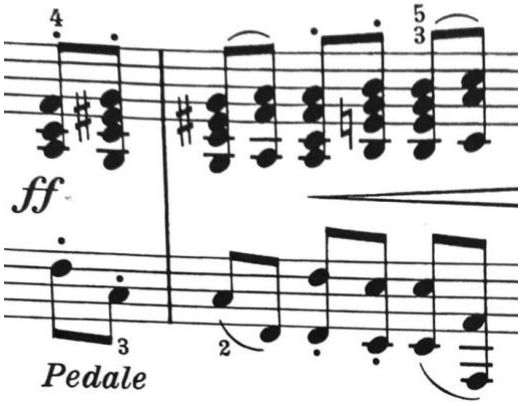

Figure 5: Robert Schumann, Piano Sonata in f-sharp minor, Movement 4, Measure 1 Pickup. Page 30.

The pianist needs to keep as close to the keys as possible. Keeping the fingers close, the pianist needs to focus on not letting the key come up all the way and not worrying about lifting the fingers and hands as high into the air as one thinks when playing staccato. In addition, using your

wrist as a spring will help keep the distance short in terms of the distance that travels for the restrike of the staccato.[154]

Non-legato playing, including staccato playing, is a more accessible type of playing for new piano students. The student can focus on playing with non-legato technique, because legato playing can require more technical work to achieve correctly. The advantage of using Laban actions is that it requires the teacher to have physical movement memories to help teach the expressive gestures. Teachers can tap into these movements for the student to better understand. A few examples that will come to mind, especially for younger-aged students, include finger painting dots, lightly popping bubbles with fingers, and tiptoeing.[155] One way for a teacher to introduce *Dab* is by having the student have a proper hand position and having them improvise by playing with as many *Dab*-like sounds as possible. The goal is to keep the fingers and hands as close to the keys as possible. This will allow them to understand how to properly *Dab* at the piano keys with a proper hand shape, while capturing the expressiveness like tiptoeing. Another example could be the teacher doing a call-and-response type of learning game, having the student either emulate or create an answering improvisation to what the teacher demonstrates in a fun and expressive nature that relates to *Dab*.

When students gain confidence in reading music, there are written examples that work on staccato playing that could help students capture the expressive nature of *Dab*. For example, Seymour Bernstein's composed examples, "Scampering" and "Tickling," provide one-hand exercises that practice the *Dab* type of gesture.[156]

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[154] Bernstein, 69.
[155] Jordan, 120.
[156] Bernstein, 70.

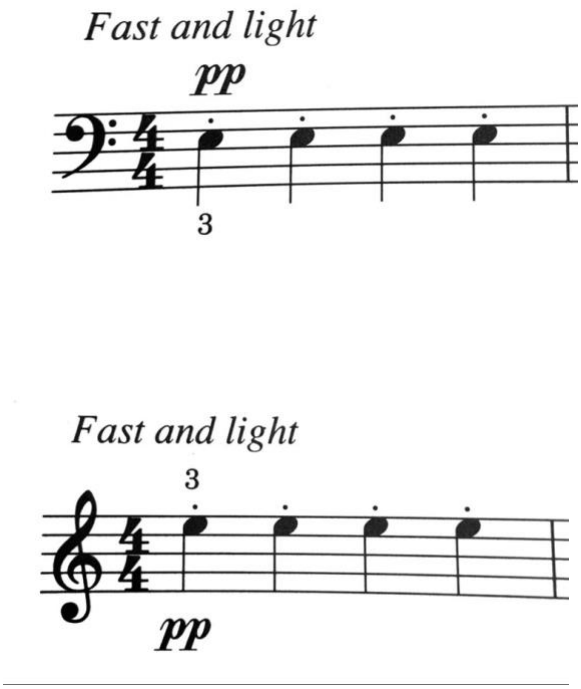


Figure 6: Seymour Bernstein, Scampering, Measure 1. Seymour Bernstein, Tickling, Measure 1. Page 70.

The titles provide extra expressive ideas for the gesture and have their sound come alive even more. Both exercises are virtually the same, one is solely for the left hand, while the other is for the right hand. The purpose of including both exercises is to demonstrate the importance of

focusing on hands alone work at first. “The Tap Dancer” is for a more advanced early learner, where they get to use both hands simultaneously, focusing on the wrist for the staccato.[157]

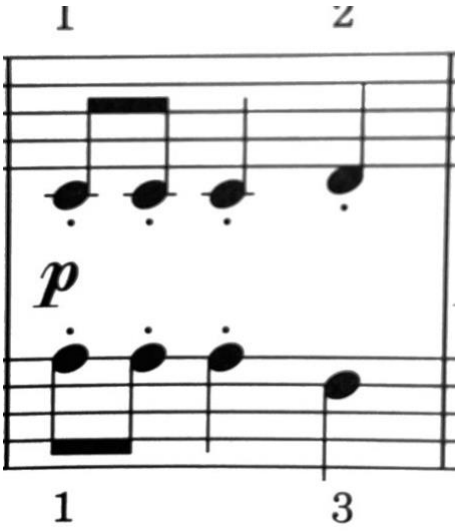
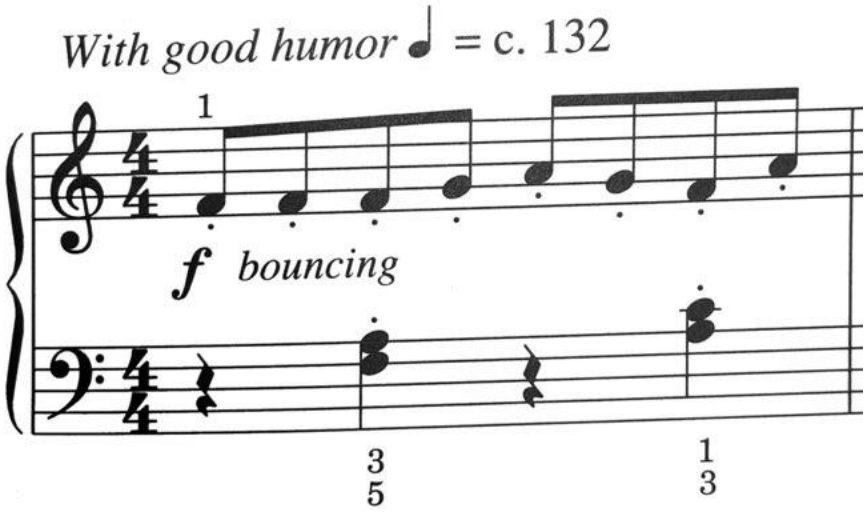


Figure 7: Seymour Bernstein, The Tap Dancer, Measure 9. Page 72.

In “All Together” by Bernstein, this excerpt combines finger and wrist action staccatos so that the student understands the *Dab* gesture in an advanced setting.[158]



[157] Bernstein, 72.
[158] Bernstein, 83.

Figure 8: Seymour Bernstein, All Together, Measure 1. Page 83.

These examples are only an introduction to how teachers can help incorporate *Dab* into their teaching practice for their piano students.

Flick:

This section will examine the Laban action gesture known as *Flick*, which shares some characteristics with *Dab*. *Flick* has quick time and light weight, but indirect space and intention. Examples of *Flick* movements include turning a light switch on and off, shooing a fly, and lightly keeping a balloon up in the air.[159] Due to the indirect quality of *Flick*, it exudes a more random quality and appears less decisive than *Dab*. Analyzing student choral conducting example videos of how *Flick* looks, certain common elements were observed in all videos. While challenging to convey the random nature of *Flick* in a conducting pattern, the use of an upward motion creates an impression of indirectness.[160] All three conductors utilized this up-motion gesture throughout their conducting, evoking the movement memory of keeping the balloon in the air.[161] Additionally, the conductors conveyed light and happy expressions on their faces, which helped amplify the light, expressive mood they aimed to create.[162]

Connecting the technique of Flick to piano playing involves highlighting its indirect nature and contrast to that of *Dab*. Jordan provides the musical sound analogy for *Flick* to grace

[159] Jordan, 121.

[160] Giselle Wyers, "Flick Video Example," directed by Giselle Wyers, July 22, 2013, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_wm18q_dwY.; Giselle Wyers, "Flick Example 1," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKcmAcppOAY.; Giselle Wyers, "Flick Example 2," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlQZFJe15a0.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Ibid.

notes and textures requiring lightness.[163] Staccato playing will be excluded from this discussion because it has already been associated with *Dab*. Grace notes and other similar piano ornaments are approached with light and quick actions, making them a suitable technique to connect with *Flick*. Liszt's *Gnomenreigen*, a piece that heavily features grace notes, opens with grace notes on most main notes, creating a buoyant feeling of dancing gnomes.[164]

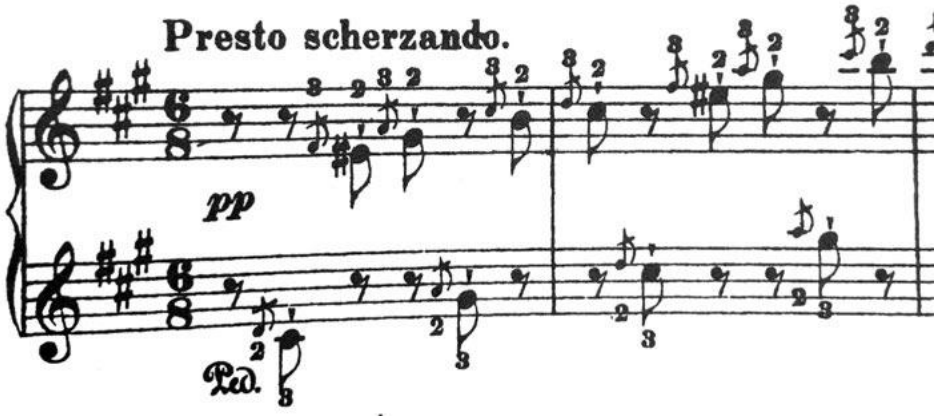


Figure 9: Franz Liszt, *Gnomereigen* Measures 1-2. Page 169.

A pianist's hand shape and finger playing are crucial to create this *Flick* expressive mindset. In a performance by György Czifrra, he keeps his hands in a relaxed position while keeping his fingers tall so that he can play with the tips of his fingers. Playing on the tips gives him more control to execute the grace notes and create a *Flick* sound emulating dancing and buoyant gnomes. But what also helps with the dancing flick experience is the expression and larger body expression Czifrra shows. Additionally, Czifrra's larger body expression, such as

[163] Jordan, 126.

[164] Franz Liszt, "Two Concert Etudes: *Gnomenreigen*," in *Complete Etudes for Solo Piano Series II: Including the Paganini Etudes and Concert Etudes*, ed. Ferruccio Busoni, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1988), 169.

bringing his head close to the keys and moving his arms and hands horizontally while letting his fingers do the brushing of the keys, helps create the dancing *Flick* experience.[165]

Another aspect of *Flick* that can be connected to piano gestures and playing in music is the sudden emphasis and feeling of the space of a rest. One example is the immediate playing of a chord followed by a small quick release, like touching a hot stove. In the ending of Liszt's *Funérailles*, the closing chords are followed immediately by rests each time a chord is played.[166]

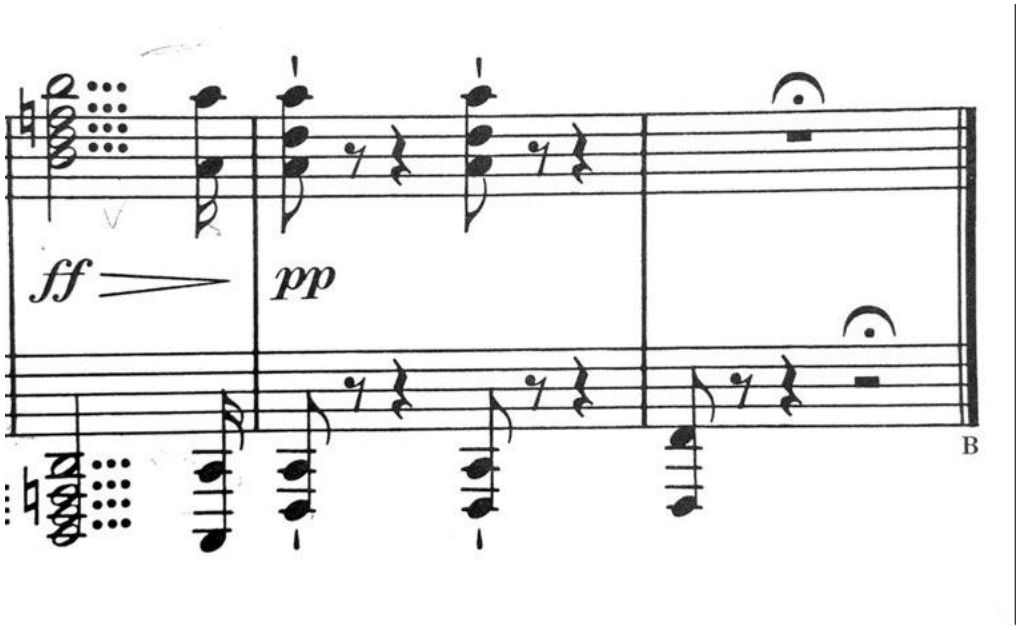


Figure 10: Franz Liszt, *Funérailles*, Measures 190-192. Page 12.

This creates a quick, indirect feeling of the chords not sounding anymore. It feels like a hand quickly letting go and reacting after touching the stove. The same release can be found with two-note slurs, where the release of the second note with the action of the wrist coming up and the release of the key and sound can be translated to a *Flick* sound on the piano.

[165] Jordan, 121.
[166] Franz Liszt, *Funérailles*, ed. Ernst-Günter Heinemann, (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2002), 12.

The question now is how a piano teacher can introduce the world of *Flick* to a newer student. The teacher can focus on the movement memories of "brushing debris off a table" and "shooing a fly" as a starting point.[167] The two-note slur and the action of the release of the second note can be quick and light. The detachment contrasts with the connection of the two notes, which gives off the indirect nature associated with *Flick*. The teacher introduces *Flick* and two-note slurs with any two fingers, and suggests that the student experience as many two-finger combinations as possible, including skipping fingers. Mirror neurons will be helpful, where the teacher can suggest having the non-dominant hand of the student mirrors what the dominant hand does with the two note-slurs, regardless of the notes being played. Piano methods like James Bastien's could incorporate the two-note slur *Flick* exercise early on, such as playing with fingers 2 and 3 on the black keys of C-sharp and D-sharp.[168]

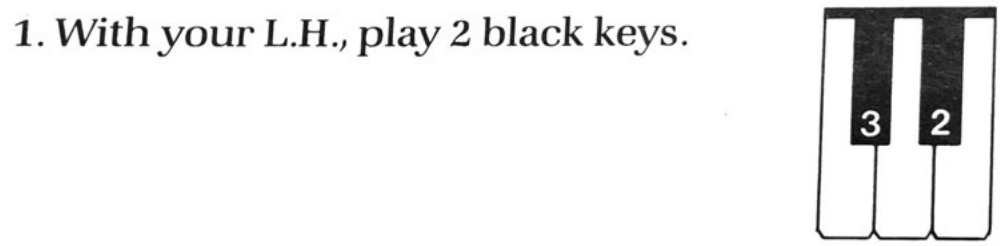


Figure 11: James Bastien, Direction 1 for Black Keys. Page 6.

The figure above shows the directions for introducing fingers 2 and 3 for the left hand.[169] Examining the rest of the page, directions are given for the right hand finger numbers 2 and 3, as

[167] Jordan, 121.

[168] James Bastien, *Bastien Piano Basics: Piano for the Young Beginner, Primer A* (San Diego: Neil A. Kjos Music Company, 1987), 6.

[169] Ibid.

well as for grouping the three black keys with finger numbers 2-3-4.[170] The expressive nature can be focused on making the release sound like the student is shooing a fly away.

Float:

The gesture of *Float* is a potentially more difficult movement for younger students to master, but when achieved, it can be a valuable expressive gesture tool for pianists. *Float* has three distinct characteristics: lightness, indirect space and intention, and sustained time. Movement memories associated with *Float* include tracing a picture with a pencil, using a bubble wand, and floating on your back in a pool. These memories evoke ideas of calm, long movements and sound with no weight, creating a feeling of freedom and relaxation.

Float, visually with choral conducting, can be identified more easily. Analyzing conducting gestures used to demonstrate float, three student conductors demonstrate a sense of lightness that conjures the essence of *Float*.[171] In the case of conductor # 1, her arms and elbows move outward and upward, immediately conveying a sense of *Float*, even if the sound is muted.[172] Conductor # 3 chooses a more minimal style of conducting, allowing the music to be at the forefront of *Float*, creating a sense of stillness, like floating in the pool.[173] By not moving much, this choice in gesture conveys the feeling of no weight. While this choice differs from that of conductor one, both options are viable expressive gestural choices for depicting *Float*.

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[170] Ibid.

[171] Giselle Wyers, "Float Example 1," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L04Z3WXFrZU.; Giselle Wyers, "Float video example," directed by Giselle Wyers, July 29, 2013, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_XPQQi5wxo.; Giselle Wyers, "Float Example 2," October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoVD-rfnqoo.

[172] Wyers, "Float Example 1."

[173] Wyers, "Float Example 2."

Below, the discussion will look at how *Float* could look as a gesture in advanced piano playing. The first example to be examined is Schubert's *Piano Sonata*. The opening long-tone chords, when played and allowed to ring and sing, creates a *Float*-like sound.[174]

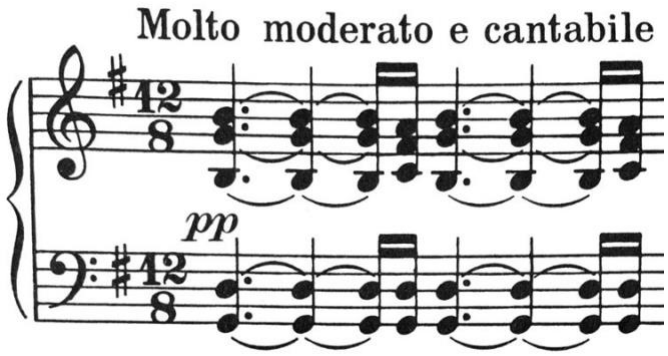

Figure 12, Franz Schubert, Piano Sonata D 894, Movement 1, Meausre 1. Page 164.

To amplify the expression, the pianist can ever so slightly raise the elbows in an outward and upward motion. This will visually emulate conductor #1, enhancing the expression of *Float* beyond just the sound. Both the pianist and audience will hopefully feel a sense of weightlessness as if they are floating in the air or on a pool float.

Another example is Erik Satie's *Gymnopédie No. 1*, where pianist Khatia Buniatishvili creates a sense of calm and relaxation by moving her arms and using her wrists.[175] When Buniatishvili moves her left hand for the required jumping of one chord to another, she does it so that it makes her arm look weightless.[176] Additionally, when she starts to play the longer tone chords, her wrist continuously comes up as she plays, making her hand seem to have a

[174] Franz Schubert, *Piano Sonatas Volume II*, ed. Paul Mies, (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1971), 164.
[175] "Khatia Buniatishvili, Khatia Buniatishvili – Erik Satie: Gymnopédie No. 1," uploaded by Sony Classical, a division of Sony Music Entertainment, October 9, 2020, music performance video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TL0xzp4zzBE.
[176] Ibid.

weightless feel.[177] These expressive gestures contribute to the resonant sound of *Float* and are key components for pianists to incorporate into their performances.

A teacher introducing Float to a student should focus on the sense of relaxation with Float, as it allows the calm sense to emerge and benefits the student from a technical standpoint. A practical way to achieve this is by having the student play sustained chords to produce full sounds using multiple fingers, while emphasizing relaxation. The teacher can demonstrate by playing chords and sustaining them for long periods of time. A useful way would be to count out aloud four and eight beats at a time. The teacher should highlight how relaxed the arms and shoulders are, even as the sound is held. The playing of the chords should be relaxed, depressing the keys instead of attacking from above and playing down. It should be noted that the body should be relaxed in posture, especially the shoulders and arms. The teacher can also demonstrate a relaxed arm while slightly moving outwards from the body, creating the illusion of a floating sound while keeping the horizontal plane, similar to the choral conductors and their movements. This exercise will be beneficial for the student to develop a sense of relaxation and a *Float* atmosphere that can be applied to more stagnant music.

To introduce *Float*, it is not necessary to rely exclusively on chords. The composed example “Floating Clouds” by James Bastien, this piece allows the student to visually and physically experience *Float* while playing individual notes at a time. In the score example below, teachers can use this piece when students can read notes or teach it by having the student mimic the teacher’s actions.[178]

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[177] Ibid.

[178] James Bastien, "Floating Clouds" *Bastien Piano Basics: Piano for the Young Beginner, Primer B* (San Diego: Neil A. Kjos Music Company, 1987), 29.

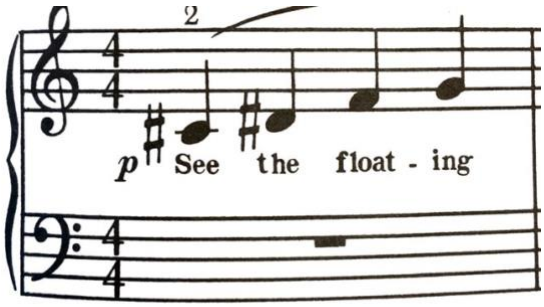

Figure 13: James Bastien, Floating Clouds, Measure 1. Page 29.

The value of this piece is that it encourages the student to use black notes early on in their learning and be comfortable with them and helps them to better position their hands. The goal to capture *Float* will be how the student keeps their gestures as stoic and calm as possible. The teacher should emphasize only playing with the fingers, by keeping the fingers on the keys and only letting the keys come down when the note is needed to play. The body should be as liquid as possible, and in a relaxed position. Additionally, the teacher can use the title of the piece to help reinforce the expressive nature that is integral to capturing the essence of *Float*.

Glide:

Glide implies light, sustained, and direct movement. In contrast to *Float*, *Glide* has specific direction and movement. Movement memories that might elicit a gliding feel are ice, wiping up a spill, icing a cake, and throwing a paper airplane.[179] Three student choral conducting examples show a smearing type of conducting gesture, similar to icing a cake.[180] Among these,

[179] Jordan, 119.

[180] Giselle Wyers, "Glide Video Example," directed by Giselle Wyers, July 23, 2013, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByrBQLxR5wA.; Giselle Wyers, "Glide Example 1," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kGATqUvBEA.; Giselle Wyers, "Glide Example 2," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArJbc7DQ0hU.

the third student conductor amplifies the effect by using horizontal gestures that give the impression of spreading butter, creating a gliding feel.[181]

The concept of *Glide* is interesting when it comes to piano performance because there are various ways in which it can be expressed through gestures. One example of *Glide* in piano performance is when a pianist executes glissandos. In the opening of Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G Major*, the pianist has glissandos that are timed to coincide with the orchestra. Analyzing Martha Argerich's performance, it is evident that she executes the glissandos with a light touch, and with direction, moving up and down the keyboard in a manner reminiscent of icing a cake.[182] The way Argerich uses her arms while keeping the hand fixed allows the glissandos to create the impression that she is gliding on the keys.[183]

Another example of *Glide* can be found in Franz Listzt's *Totentanz*, a piano and orchestra work that features multiple chromatic scalar passages the pianist has to perform rapidly. Pianist Bertrand Chamayou gives a great example of an expressive glide with chromatic scales. Like the student choral conducting examples, Chamayou keeps everything very horizontal, keeping his arms steady while moving only left and right along the keys, with only his fingers doing the playing.[184] In some passages, he has to play high up the piano register, requiring his torso to move with his arms, which enhances the impression of gliding up and down the keys.[185] In both examples, the pianists play with intensity, to keep a sustained sound, helping reinforce the expression of *Glide*.

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[181] Wyers, "Glide example 2."

[182] Martha Argerich, "Martha Argerich: Ravel – Piano Concerto in G Major | Nobel Prize Concert 2009," uploaded by EuroArtsChannel, June 30, 2018, music performance video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJOW5mlhH_Y&t=34s.

[183] Ibid.

[184] Bertrand Chamayou, "Liszt: Totentanz – hr-Sinfonieorchester – Bertrand Chamayou – Jérémie Rhorer," uploaded by hr-Sinfonieorchester – Frankfurt Radio Symphony, May 23, 2014, music performance video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrmaZGjWg1I.

[185] Ibid.

Borrowing from the Ravel example, multiple glissandos played rhythmically can help a student pianist experience the sensation of *Glide*. The teacher should first demonstrate glissandos on the piano, one hand at a time. It is important to emphasize the smooth, horizontal motion of the arm while keeping the elbow and shoulders relaxed and still, as liquid as possible. The teacher will need to instruct the student to move with their torso so that the shoulders do not become involved and avoid tension. At first, the student may have difficulty playing an even glissando up or down. The teacher can help the student focus on an even glissando by having them arrive at the top over a certain number of beats counted aloud, with the number given by the teacher. The goal is to have the student traverse from one end of the keyboard to the other, maintaining the lightness of touch and sustained sound. The student can then progress to performing continuous glissandos up and down the piano to create the image of icing a cake.

The glissando is one of many ways to introduce a newer student to glide. Another exercise is to have the fingers move in a light, sustained fashion back and forth. The hand will be in a five-finger position from E to B, with the three middle fingers over the three black keys. To execute this exercise, the student should play with the fingertips and let the key come up by releasing, rather than lifting the finger, as seen in the picture below.[186] This is prudent so as not to use any wasteful movements by lifting.

[186] Nicholas Tagab, *Hand Position at Piano*, April 12, 2023,iPhone Camera, Seattle.

Figure 14: Nicholas Tagab, Hand Position at Piano.

The student's goal is to traverse up and down the five fingers with consistent, light pressure, while manipulating the speed within control to match the directness of *Glide*. This exercise introduces new students to use all five fingers early in the learning process while introducing proper technique and hand position. In addition, this exercise will also allow the student to work on increasing and decreasing the dynamics of their sound as they go up and down the five-finger pattern. The teacher can coach on one direction getting louder and decreasing in the other direction. The teacher can name this exercise the "frosting/icing a cake/cupcake" exercise.

Press:

The Laban action of *Press* shares many similarities to *Glide*, but with a contrasting weight quality, strong instead of light. Like *Glide*, *Press* has sustained time and direct space. Movement memories that connect with *Press* include moving a lawnmower, making mashed potatoes, and ironing a shirt.[187] These movement memories communicate a feeling of

[187] Jordan, 118.

sustainment, but what distinguishes it is how much weight is put into the action. For instance, moving a piano is a heavy task that requires significant weight and energy. All of these movements demand concentration and require more extended periods of time.

Upon analyzing two student conducting videos demonstrating *Press*, it is evident that both conductors aim for a connected sound by using sustained gestures.[188] The first conductor, in particular, effectively demonstrates the strong weight, with emphasis coming from using her arms.[189] By fully utilizing her arms, she conducts a strong singing sound reciprocated with the piano playing.[190] The strong weight can also be interpreted as something full and intentional, similar to ironing a shirt. Both conductors showed that a strong weight produces a more connected and robust sound.

Full legato singing sounds immediately come to mind when thinking about how *Press* can be expressed through piano performance. A prime example of this is the opening theme of the third movement from Beethoven's *Piano Sonata Op. 109*. Playing the opening requires the pianist to play with a full singing sound, even though the dynamics are marked soft with minimal use of a heavy-weighted sound. Pianist András Schiff effectively produces this sound by using his fingers to apply the weight, ensuring that the full weight of the key is used.[191] Schiff captures the gentle part by keeping his arms more relaxed, but when the sound get fuller with the chords, he does a good job of utilizing his arms and torso to help put more weight into the sound.[192] Another example to examine is Chopin's *Polonaise Op. 40 No. 2 in c minor*. Ivo Pogorelich's

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[188] Giselle Wyers, "Press Example 1," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JAiPFtc44N4.; Giselle Wyers, "Press Video Example," directed by Giselle Wyers, July 22, 2013, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQBxaRYyCRg.

[189] Wyers, "Press Example 1."

[190] ibid

[191] András Schiff, "Beethoven Piano Sonata No.30 – Andras Schiff," recorded in Japan, 2013, music performance video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15EFrXnj49Q.

[192] Ibid.

performance captures the press sound by using more of his arm to help add weight to his sound while keeping it sustained and legato singing.[193] What Pogorelich does to help keep the sound full but not harsh and forceful is how he uses his wrist.[194] The wrist as a springboard helps keep the sound sustained and singing without it being forced.

It is essential to note that the gesture of *Press* carries strong associations that should be utilized in piano performance. Piano pedagogues have cautioned against "pressing" keys as it can cause unnecessary tension in the body, leading to physical harm. The teacher must emphasize that the gesture is about an expressive sound, not the physical force of the action. An exercise to introduce *Press* would be playing and sustaining a chord in both hands. Adding the arm weight brings in the strong element of *Press*, and holding the chords for longer periods of time matches the sustainment element. One way to make this exercise more interesting is to have the student focus on keeping the movements as similar and focused as possible. This will help them capture the direct nature of *Press*. Variations in the exercise, such as playing octave intervals, can emulate the Chopin example and provide a different approach to the hand.

To help students explore the concept of *Press*, the teacher can incorporate a composed exercise into the piano lessons. One such exercise is "The Bugle Boys" from the Faber *Piano Adventures*. This piece has the student work on the action of *Press* in a controlled manner, with guidance from the teacher. In the score example below, the student plays open 5th intervals in the left hand.[195] The opening measure uses a whole note, with subsequent measures also incorporating quarter notes.[196]

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[193] Ivo Pogorelich, "Ivo Pogorelich – Chopin- Polonaise No 2 in C minor, Op 40," uploaded by Classical Vault 1, March 29, 2013, music performance video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbtBV-_oGek.

[194] Ibid.

[195] Nancy Faber and Randall Faber, "Bugle Boys," *Piano Adventures: Lesson Book, Primer Level*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Dovetree Productions, Inc., 2011), 70.

[196] Ibid.

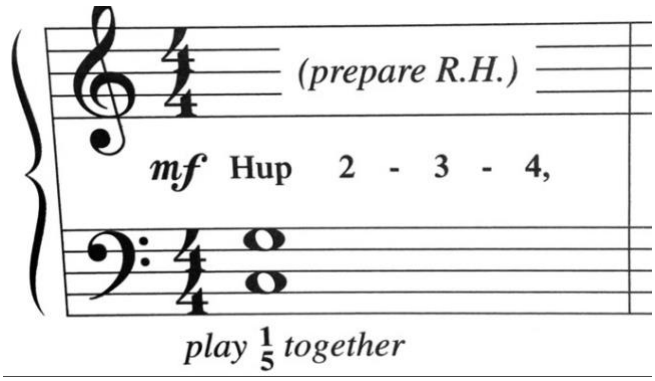

Figure 15: Nancy and Randall Raber, Bugle Boys, Measure 1. Page 70.

The sustained action of the whole note intervals and strong, direct attack of the intervals make this piece particularly suited for incorporating *Press*. This exercise encourages students to read music, rather than solely relying on rote instruction from the teacher. Overall, utilizing *Press* as a gesture in piano requires careful consideration because of the connotations. Proper technique is crucial to prevent physical harm, and the teacher must emphasize the expressive sound the gesture intends to convey.

Slash:

The Laban movement of *Slash* conveys a strong connotation of forceful playing. However, it is important to note that it must still be in tune with the body, without leading to any discomfort or pain. *Slash* involves indirect space, strong weight, and quick time. It draws on movement memories, including swinging a baseball bat and fencing.[197] Other examples include slamming a door and cutting vegetables.[198] The unpredictable and forceful nature of *Slash* comes from the three elements listed above, and all of these memories align with Slash.

[197] Jordan, 122.
[198] Ibid.

Observing student choral conductors demonstrating Slash gestures, all three exuded strong movements with full weight.[199] The conductors made sure to keep their shoulders relaxed to avoid tension.[200] The weight is instead incorporated into their arms to add to the strength of their gestures.[201] Additionally, all of the gestures come from different angles and levels, conveying the indirectness of the movement, as there is no fixed direction in which the gesture moves.[202] As a result, their movements appear as if they are slashing with a sword, and this energy is then translated into the sound produced by the piano.

The concept of *Slash* has elements of indirectness, strong weight, and quick time, and it can be found in piano performance and gestures. The opening of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata Op. 111* will be looked at by three pianists: András Schiff, Maurizio Pollini, and Evgeny Kissin. The opening sixteenth-note chords act as a surprise and, because of the quick and strong nature, have

[199] Giselle Wyers, "Slash Example 1," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpS3JDbJUmA.; Giselle Wyers, "Slash Example 2," directed by Giselle Wyers, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CxownkKMTA.; Giselle Wyers, "Slash Example 3," directed by Giselle Wyers, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CxownkKMTA.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Ibid.

the elements of what slash might represent with piano playing.[203]

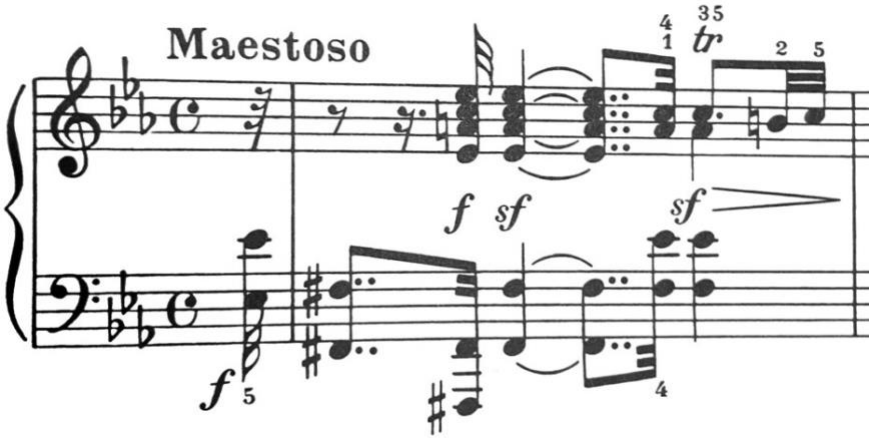

Figure 16: Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Sonata Op. 111, Measure 1, Page 3.

Kissin produces a loud and full sound without lifting his arm much, giving off the surprising nature of Slash through its indirectness.[204] Pollini, on the other hand, involves his wrist to help create a quick and crisp attack.[205] Contrasting with these two, Schiff uses wider arm movements to produce full and weighted sounds.[206] While he may have planned these wider arcs with his arms, they do give off the indirect nature to the audience because the movements are not quick, and the sound produced is fuller in sound and weight.[207]

Teaching *Slash* as a gesture to early piano learners requires attention to proper technique to avoid harsh playing and sound production. To introduce the concept of *Slash*, pedagogues can

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[203] Ludwig van Beethoven, *Piano Sonata no. 32 in c minor op. 111*, ed. Bertha Antonia Wallner, (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1980,) 3.

[204] Evgeny Kissin, "Beethoven – Piano Sonata No.32 in C minor, Op. 111 | Evgeny Kissin," uploaded by Klassische Musik, June 10, 2019, live performance video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AQ9hZTpgwM.

[205] Maurizio Pollini, "Maurizio Pollini – Beethoven Piano Sonatas op. 109, 110, 111 – video 1998," recorded live in Tokyo, April 25, 1998, music performance video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hbn71iXKK7Y&t=2196s.

[206] András Schiff, "Beethoven Piano Sonata No 32 C minor Op 111 András Schiff + encore Bach," uploaded by Sonorum Concentus Beethoven, March 22, 2021, music performance video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ie2xYOMVL3U.

[207] Ibid.

use fun, expressive gestures, focusing on the release and the attack of the movements. The teacher can demonstrate a dramatic and quick release in a direction that both hands take, emulating the action of swinging a sword or stick. The attack can be practiced through dotted rhythms, as in the Beethoven example studied above, where a short-long strike of two chords can emulate the principles of *Slash*. Striking the chord from above, even just a little above the key will give off *Slash's* visual and auditory feel, as seen both in the choral conducting examples and the Beethoven sonata. By focusing on the sense of surprise, indirectness, and force, early piano learners can effectively capture *Slash's* nature without harsh playing tones and improper use of their bodies to create an effective expressive gesture.

Wring:

Elements of directness, strong weight, and sustained time form the action of *Wring*. *Wring* has can be connected to a wrapping sound that is strong and forceful, yet lacks directness. Jordan describes movement memories of *Wring* to include twisting a washcloth dry, tightening a jar cap, and using a screwdriver.[208] Such actions are intense, even if they are not grand or dramatic. Analyzing the gestures of three student choral conductors, they are trying to demonstrate a gesture that requires physical strength and emotional investment. Looking at conductor #1, he exhibits a palpable weightiness in his arms, expressing the difficulty of performing the gesture.[209] The other two conductors also demonstrate strength, but to a lesser

[208] Jordan, 117.

[209] Giselle Wyers, "Wring Example 1," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDeWItUunP8.

extent.[210] Furthermore, conductor #1 involves sustained and direct movements, thereby embodying the elements required for this action.[211]

Wring can be a difficult Laban gesture to execute for pianists, but it can be identified in piano performance through careful analysis. Seon-Jin Cho's performance of Chopin's "Prelude in c minor, No. 20 from Opus 28", exhibits several gestures that convey the sense of *Wring*. Many of Cho's movements vary in weight and motion, and his wrist shows subtle changes in direction and depth.[212] These movements resemble the gestures of the student choral conductors, which involve sustained and non-quick movements in different directions.

To introduce *Wring* as an expressive gesture to piano students, one must understand its difficulty in execution. Reviewing the movement memories includes tightening a jar or using a screwdriver.[213] The twisting element is difficult to show and perform on the piano. However, the concept of the effort to perform a task can be utilized to see how *Wring* fits into piano pedagogy. Additionally, in analyzing the piano example above, the wrist can be a way to tap into teaching wring. Based on the analysis, *Wring* will likely occur when playing chords, which can be used as an exercise for students. The chords should be sustained, indirect, and strong, with wrist and arm movements varying in length and depth. The teacher can demonstrate as Cho did with playing triad chords and taking different heights and depths with the wrist as the chord is being held. When playing these chords, it would be great to have the student play both major and minor chords, eventually having them use diminished and augmented chords to introduce to their ears

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[210] Giselle Wyers, "Wring Example 2," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnLYPNb0KzQ.; Giselle Wyers, "Video Example Wring," directed by Giselle Wyers, July 22, 2013, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljlqSpwGkJI.

[211] Wyers, "Wring Example 1."

[212] Seong-Jin Cho, "Seong-Jin Cho – Prelude in C minor Op. 28 No. 20 (third stage)," uploaded by Chopin Institute, October 24, 2015, music performance video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ov2lpIuLFF8.

[213] Jordan, 117

the different timbres and qualities of these chords. The teacher can work with the student on having the arms pronate and supinate slightly, imitating the gestures from the choral conductors. Overall, this is not the easiest gesture to capture, but some of these introductions will hopefully bring out the expression of *Wring* in the playing of newer piano students.

Punch:

The Laban action of *Punch* is characterized by direct space, strong weight, and quick time. The movements are quick, forceful, and direct. Movement memories associated with Punch include plumping a pillow, boxing, pounding a fist on a table, and hammering a nail.[214] Analyzing two student choral conducting examples, both conductors effectively demonstrate qualities of punch, especially in the strength of their arm movements.[215] The gestures also show directness with intention and focus, in contrast to the more fluid and non-specific qualities of *Slash*.

The technique of *Punch* in piano performance involves a strong, focused attack with plosive articulation and weight dedicated by the pianist's arms and wrists. An excellent example of this technique is the opening chords of the *Rhapsody in E-flat minor Op. 119, No. 4* by Brahms. The opening chords are explosive sounding, very strong, and executed evenly and direct.[216]

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[214] Jordan, Wyers, and Andrews, 123.

[215] Giselle Wyers, "Punch Example 1," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ai7ICHInNzc.; Giselle Wyers, "Punch Example 2," directed by Giselle Wyers, October 6, 2014, conducting demonstration video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_RbMa8t9_ho.

[216] Johannes Brahms, "Rhapsodie," in *Klavierstüke*, ed. Monica Steegmann, (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1976), 114.

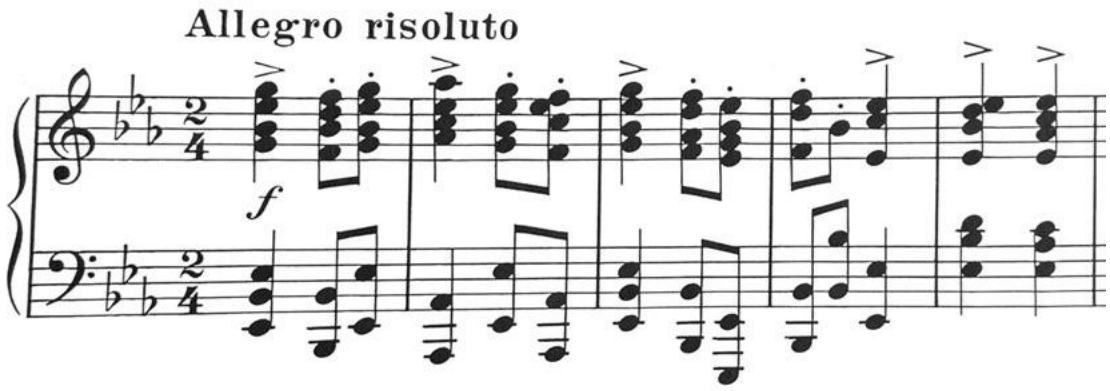

Figure 17: Johannes Brahms, Rhapsodie, Measures 1-5. Page 114.

Pianist Shai Wosner captures this well, using the full weight of his arms to capture the strong punch-like sound without strain or force.[217] By utilizing his wrists as shock absorbers to keep the sound full but not overtaxed, Wosner is able to achieve a powerful sound that is direct, intense, and exciting for the listener.[218] Teachers can use Wosner's performance as a model for introducing *Punch* to students as part of their expressive gestural palate.

Punch is a Laban action that is highly applicable to expressive piano playing and can be taught to new students thoughtfully. In my experience as a piano teacher, often, new students tend not to understand how to use their hands correctly on the piano and end up playing with too much force and sound. To incorporate *Punch*, teachers should start by teaching students to drop their arms and feel the weight of their arms dropping onto the keys, which will produce a strong and full sound. The wrist is also critical in executing *Punch*, as it keeps the sound from becoming harsh and prevents tension from building up in the student's body. Teachers can demonstrate

[217] Shai Wosner, "Brahms: Rhapsody in E flat major for Piano, Op. 119, No. 4," uploaded by Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, October 21, 2014, music performance video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nalDi-c7L8.

[218] Ibid.

playing root position triads and have students practice creating a plosive *Punch* sound evenly with a constant rhythm. As the student becomes more advanced, the goal should be to jump back and forth between two chords of some distance while maintaining the *Punch* sound. The goal is to emulate the gestures of choral conductors and achieve a direct, focused sound with quick movements between the chords. It is crucial to ensure that *Punch* does not become *Slash* with the release. Students should be taught to release the sound directly and focus on letting go rather than moving and lifting to release.

Summary

The preceding discussion introduces how Laban's ideas can be approached from the perspectives of piano performance and pedagogy. Each of the Laban actions is associated with different emotions based on the movement memories with examples provided by Jordan and Wyers. Because of these examples, certain emotions can be connected to the gestures, with some positive associations, and others with negative connotations. However, the movements don't have to fit into one category or the other exclusively.

This discussion focused on the physical nature of the movements and gestures. The intent of those gestures was to produce emotion and expression in mind from the performer, and, ultimately, to help elicit those expressions in the audience. Using the movement memories as a guide, students and teachers will start to understand how working with the ideas of Laban can help bring expressive intention to their playing. For young or new students, this approach allows the technique to remain a focus, while introducing expressive ideas with the commitment to expressive playing from the outset. This will enable students to start to understand how music

works with emotions and expressions. It will then give students ideas to make musical choices that reflect the emotions and expressions they want to highlight within their repertoire.

While the significant focus was given to the hands, arms, and torso, facial expressions are also crucial. Although the profile of the pianist is viewed from the side, audiences can still discern information from facial expressions. This includes the raising of eyebrows to the pursing or smiling of lips. It will be critical for the teacher to acknowledge and potentially work with students on facial expressions. A logical approach to introducing a new Laban action would be to first describe the action and bring up associated movement memories. It would be appropriate for them to have the student experience and express everything associated with the movement memories, including facial expressions. For instance, with the action *Dab*, the teacher and student standing could pretend to dot "I's" in the air with one finger. While doing this, the teacher can also demonstrate their facial expression, raising the eyebrows to elevate the feel of the light *Dab* touches even further. It should be noted that tension should not be revealed through the face.

Regarding Laban and piano teaching, it is important to highlight that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching Laban actions and conducting gestures. Teachers should be flexible in finding what works best for them and their students. In addition, teachers need to spend time planning how to incorporate these Laban actions and ideas in their teaching.

One approach to incorporating Laban's actions from the outset of piano lessons is by using them while introducing the piano to students. By doing so, the goal for the teacher is to create a foundation for expressive playing that can be applied throughout the learning process. This can be especially useful when working with younger or newer students, as it allows them to develop techniques while exploring music's emotional aspects.

It is important to note that conducting gestures used for teaching piano should not be reserved solely for advanced piano students. As shown in the Simone, Rodger, and Schroeder study, conducting gestures should be used as a teaching tool for piano teachers.[219] In fact, they found that most teachers used conducting gestures as a pedagogical tool with more advanced students. However, based on the exploration above, it would be equally important for the teacher to incorporate conducting gestures much earlier in the piano learning.[220] Teachers can help students develop expressive performance skills much earlier on by studying and incorporating the Laban conducting gestures.

In addition to individual lessons, Laban's teaching can be incorporated into group classes or studio classes. The teacher could easily incorporate the Laban actions described above regarding group piano lesson situations. This provides an excellent opportunity for the teacher to incorporate expressive playing while focusing on technique. For example, teachers can use improvisation exercises between partners to explore how students model the Laban actions, or have one student model a gesture as a conducting pattern while the other improvises music based on what they see. Studio classes also offer a space for students to learn from each other and develop their skills in a collaborative environment. Teachers can use more advanced pieces that incorporate Laban actions as a way to challenge students and encourage them to identify different gestures and expressions. They can also have students guess what the main and secondary actions might be for a particular piece.

Incorporating Laban's actions and conducting gestures into piano teaching can have a transformative impact on students' development as musicians. By exploring the emotional

[219] Simone, Rodger, and Schroeder, 730.
[220] Ibid.

dimensions of music and developing expressive performance skills early on, students can create a strong foundation for a lifetime of musical growth and development.

5. Conclusion

Based on the current scholarship, expressive gestures are crucial to help audiences understand the performer's emotions. By exploring Laban's work on gesture and taking Jordan's and Wyers' choral conducting work, pianists will gain ideas on incorporating it into their playing. Choral conducting expressive gestures and movements based on Laban can be helpful for pianists and piano pedagogues to enhance the emotional and expressive nature of piano performance. Gestures play a significant role in physical displays integral to piano performance. Expressive gestures amplify the emotions the performance conveys.

Advanced pianists can expand their thought processes and playing by utilizing Laban's ideas and gestures into their performances. In contrast, teachers can bring expressive teaching to young and new students immediately by incorporating Laban's works into their teaching. As shown above, teachers can apply Laban's ideas to technique learning by improvising or integrating them into the method books. If applicable, teachers can reinforce these ideas in their studio classes or apply them to their group piano classes. Moreover, this type of learning does not need to be restricted to piano lessons but can be a tool for general music classes.

As an introduction, pianists and piano pedagogues can continue to explore Laban and Jordan's and Wyers' work and develop new ways to expand the piano scholarship. One such way is to create a collection/catalog of piano works organized based on the eight Laban actions. The guide would group the pieces into different levels, explaining the primary Laban action while acknowledging any secondary actions. This would hopefully provide another resource guide for pianists and teachers to pick repertoire. It would allow pianists to see how one could organize repertoire that stylistically fits specific Laban actions.

It is essential to note that this dissertation focuses on one aspect of Laban's work, the actions. However, there are other drives and states that can and should be studied on how to combine them with piano performance, pedagogy, and scholarship. Some of this discussion's limits were applying the Laban actions to piano performance and pedagogy. For example, the actions of *Wring* and *Press* were challenging to transpose to piano pedagogy and performance. Additionally, while other Laban experts may or may not agree with the musical choice examples and exercises, this dissertation provides one interpretation of how these actions can be used in piano performance and pedagogy.

I feel the pedagogue Heinrich Neuhaus, a student of Richter, put it best with teaching, "the clearer the goal…the clearer the means of attaining it."[221] Teachers that want to incorporate these ideas by Laban and the choral conducting gestures adapted by James Jordan and Giselle Wyers should be sure to keep their ideas and teaching as clear as possible. My goal is for this dissertation is to be a starting point for future discussion on how pianists can work to assimilate more of Laban's ideas into this field. To that end, Neuhaus says, "and if my writing can help anyone to penetrate more deeply into our wonderful art and, even if only slightly, stir his feelings and thoughts, I shall be quite content."[222]

[221] Neuhaus, 3.
[222] Ibid, 235.

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