

NEW ARTS PRESS OF PERTH

Piano Teaching – A Guide for Nurturing

Musical Independence

Faith Maydwell

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It is always interesting to read the pearls of wisdom of other pianists and teachers. Their experiences and conclusions can provide food for thought as well as confirm your own ideas. Faith Maydwell can trace her piano teaching lineage back to Beethoven, something of which she is understandably proud. But she has not rested on her laurels and has a c.v. that includes performing, teaching, lecturing and examining. Her new book looks at ways of inspiring our students and leading them to musical independence.

The book begins by asking teachers to rethink why they play the piano, why they became teachers and their attitude to teaching. It is good to be reminded of these things after many years of teaching. It is good also to be reminded of the kind of dedication required to be a piano teacher and how we received that dedication from our own teachers and the way in which we try to pass on what they shared with us. The list for a 'Designer Piano Teacher' has nineteen different qualities! As Faith Maydwell points out we are unlikely to have them all but that should not stop us striving to achieve them, if in small amounts, for the benefit of our students. If we are to work to help students achieve their best, and by this she means play the music beyond the notes on the printed page, we must work to help students think and work independently. This kind of teaching is very skilled and should not be underestimated.

Using 'Art Music' as an acronym Faith Maydwell discusses the eight

main areas for a piano lesson to include: aural, repertoire, technique, memory, understanding, sight-reading, improvisation/composition, chords/harmony. It is a huge requirement but several suggestions for activities demonstrate how this can be done. Using this approach right from the first lesson means that the student learns to think in this way for him/herself.

Faith Maydwell's tone is always encouraging and always humble. She offers suggestions for everything connected to teaching from pedagogical advice, child development and teaching adults to the practicalities of running a business from accounts to buying an instrument. The human side of learning an instrument is never lost sight of – neither its difficulties nor joys, the importance of positive experiences or the necessity of learning from negative ones. The text has many stories from the diary of her experiences as a piano teacher of moments that have brought her realisations about her own teaching. It is very true that as teachers we learn constantly from our students.

Faith Maydwell is certainly a teacher to emulate; her thoughts and expertise shared in *Piano Teaching – A Guide for Nurturing Musical Independence* offer inspiration to us all.

Angela Fogg