

Jankovic Method

There are many methods that improve the technical aspect of playing. But very few that show a way to systematically work on the musical aspect and best combine the technical aspect with the musical. I have developed this method to understand the importance of the inner attitude, thoughts and emotions in all phases of the technical and musical work on a piece of music and to consciously practice a holistic approach.

I have to reach back a little: Our goal as interpreters is to play the music as the composer inwardly heard it while composing.

Until the second half of the 19th century, there was no separation between composer and performer. But with the advent of musicians who act as performers, there is a very great danger of shifting the focus to the virtuosic skills and effect of the person playing, and moving far away from the compositional and therefore musical understanding of the work being played. Unfortunately, we see this too often.

In current music studies, all students receive a lot of information about the composers they play and also the necessary skills to be able to analyze scores harmonically and structurally. But often they do not use them and do not find an adequate personal approach to the composers and their works. Therefore, they listen to the recordings of the famous performers and in this way try to understand and interpret the music. With my method I give concrete exercises to develop personal musical understanding and experience with the music of other composers and show a way to combine objective facts and intellectual information with subjective imagination, inspiration and intuition.

The method is divided into three parts:

(1) "Living in the world of the composer" whose music you are playing.

I like to work in groups, because the exchange is enriching for everyone. The method can also be practiced very well alone. Together we first collect information and knowledge about the respective composer(s), which comes from the field of musicology: Biographical facts, studying and listening to pieces of music, looking at pictures, reading letters and texts of the composer*. Before the first meeting, students are encouraged to study on their own.

There is discussion in the group, I share my personal feelings and impressions and encourage everyone to do likewise without inhibition. A personal approach to the composer is sought for each student, which deepens as the work progresses.

Using the Stanislavsky method (which allows the actor to immerse himself in and deeply identify with another personality), I encourage students to regularly perform the following exercises:

First exercise: to intuitively get to know and understand the world and language of the composer. It consists in imagining the composer, personally experiencing how he listens attentively and sometimes gives instructions while playing his piece. This creates a strong connection with the composer, with whose ears one can hear and play, so to speak. The musical message is always present for the performer, even during the technical development of the piece, because the composer is listening.

The second exercise goes one step further: thinking and feeling: "Bach plays through me", or "I try to be Bach when I play his music". It is a very effective, exciting and holistic approach to learn, understand and experience the musical language of each composer. The focus is on the work rather than the performer, horizons are opened, and students practice playing as composers rather than instrumentalists.

(2) Developing the personal concept of a piece of music.

The concept here means a personal story or vision for each piece, which serves as a guide and inspiration for the musicians at every stage of working out and performing the piece of music. We reconnect musicological knowledge with our intuition and imagination.

The concept consists of two parts:

I What does the entire work "talk" about? Maybe you find a coherent story - you consider the keys and form in each movement.

II Detailed about the character, statement and role of each theme, one follows the structure. (Here is an example: my concept for the Franck Sonata).

I explain to the students that the music of the great geniuses like Bach, Beethoven, Bartók, and almost all the composers we play, tells us about universal themes and feelings that are central and important to all of humanity. Comparable to writings by Goethe and Rilke. It is important to verbalize these ideas for ourselves in the working process. I encourage my students to immerse themselves in the aesthetic, spiritual and emotional world of the composers. With music by Bach, we can be inspired by biblical stories; with Tchaikovsky works, by Pushkin or Tolstoy. Many pieces of music can be structured and experienced with the help of symbolic stories from Greek mythology (e.g. Franck Sonata or Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto).

After a few explanations at the beginning, one then works on the concept alone, preferably in nature, with inspiration and with a lot of imagination and fantasy. Everyone tries to think as a composer and put themselves into the process of composing. All ideas, images, moods and feelings are described in simple but strong and personal words. With a little practice, all students can do it. Of course, the concept must always be updated and deepened with new insights and ideas.

This concept is different from the work analyses, but contains much of this information. Its purpose is to serve as inspiration and guidance for the students so that their concentration remains on the musical idea and statement. In this way, they practice proper attitude and musical listening at every moment of playing.

(3) Experiencing music, practicing with and without an instrument. Practical implementation of the concept in each phase of the work.

Afterwards, the correct experience of the concept is practiced with and without an instrument. Often the idea is only in the head and not in the heart. I ask students to sing a lot in the beginning to integrate and practice the right musical state in the overall system (head, body, emotion). To help students with these processes, interdisciplinary techniques often play a role. To do this, I draw on analogies from literature, comparing shorter pieces of music to a narrative or poem, and longer pieces to a multi-part novel. Conducting and dancing are very helpful. Pictures, animals, nature, other people, poems, stories, movies, everything can be an inspiration.

The core of my method is to always practice the musically appropriate state in the body along with it. Actors never forget the meaning of the words when they practice the phrase "I am sad."

When musicians practice a musical phrase and have no musical idea of what it is "talking about," they may find solutions that are technically good but musically inappropriate. By having a clear musical idea even when practicing slowly and technically, the meaning of the theme is preserved. Only then do all technical solutions become musically correct and the feeling is transferred to the sound.

In the regular auditions and discussions in class, we practice making music in front of an audience down to the smallest detail. This is that wonderful moment for which the musicians practice for so long. The magical atmosphere that is created between musician and audience is very valuable. Even if it is a competition or an exam, there are always people we are playing for to share the musical experience with.

The *Jankovic method* can be practiced anywhere. The focus of the method is the integration of versatile knowledge from different fields with the musician's practice. Young musicians today are expected to perform at an increasingly high level. The method helps those with the right attitude to work with pleasure at a very high professional level and prepare for professional life. The resulting self-confidence is for the young musicians the important basis for a successful and happy life, whether as a soloist, orchestral musician or educator.