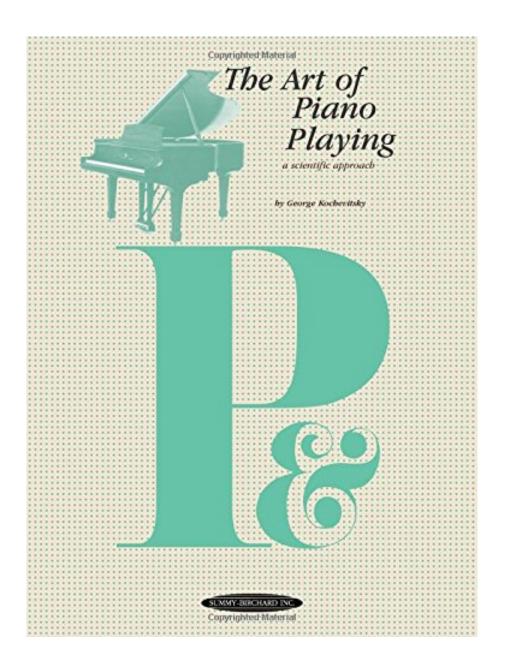


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So many of the great pianists and teachers have come out of Poland and Russia (Rubinstein, Anton as well as Arthur, Leschetizky, Paderewski, the Lhevinnes, Gilels, Richter, and others), yet we know little about their methods of learning and teaching. George Kochevitsky in The Art of Piano Playing supplies some important sources of information previously unavailable in this country. Russian sources alone occupy four columns of his bibliography on 'History and Theory of Pianism.' Additionally there are six columns of German sources and seven columns of sources in English. From these sources, tempered by this own thinking, Kochevitsky has formulated a scientific approach that can solve most problems of piano playing and teaching. George Kochevitsky graduated in 1930 from Leningrad Conservatory and did post-graduate work at Moscow Conservatory. Coming to the U.S., he has taught privately in New York City, given a number of lectures, and written for various music periodicals.

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Too heavy on the theoretical side

By frankp93

I read somewhere that if you can take one good idea away from reading a book, consider the experience a success. Call me greedy, but I expected more practical advice from "The Art of Piano Playing". The author's intent is to show how the central nervous system plays a primary role in the learning/performing process. He makes his case with an historical survey of earlier schools of thought concerning piano technique that, according to the author, culminated in an impasse in the early twentieth century. As scientific research into brain functioning progressed, the tools were now in place to make a case for the neurobiological basis of piano technique. What this boils down to is, essentially: 1) the aural image one creates in the mind of a musical composition is paramount and the urge to recreate that image will drive the learning and performing process. 2) practice slowly to establish and engrain neurological connections. 3) be flexible in your technique

regarding fingering, arm position, etc. 4) the most effective learning is accompanied by intense concentration.

I've simplified, but this is what I walked away with. Unfortunately, the author spends more time justifying his theoretical argument than describing the practical application of his ideas. The book was written in 1967 when perhaps these thoughts were more radical. If you're intrigued and enjoy a heavy scientific bent, this book might be for you, but if you're looking for detailed practical advice on piano technique, I'm afraid other authors have done it better.

17 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Probably the best book on the mind/body/nervous system/piano relationship By Baz

I agree with the previous reviewer that this book can be heavy going, though after repeated readings none of the writing seems to me to be waffle or redundant. However, this is more than compensated for by the breadth of coverage of the various schools of piano pedagogy and the problems associated with each. The amount of research that Kochevitsky displays both scientifically with relation to piano playing and piano pedagogy itself is simply awesome (the bibiliography will blow your mind!)

It seems to me that this book needs careful and repeated reading to get the best out of it. There are real nuggets to be mined, but they're buried in the rubble of explanation instead of being clearly dug out into a separate chapter.

Even at the beginning of the 21st century, almost all the old books on piano playing can still be easily found and one of this book's great merits is the careful deconstruction of all that's misguided in all of them. It seems that the great pianists have become great through their own analysis and musical genius despite the teaching of any one school.

It's easy to miss this book in looking for the best in learning the piano. I've read almost all of them before finding it. But there's a LOT in here and I highly recommend a careful study of this book if you find your playing has hit a brick wall.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

The Art of Piano Playing

By Miguel Gonçalves Henriques

Almost everything is said about Kochevitsky's book. Nevertheless I do not think it as a heavy book (80 pages??). Its bibliography is thouroughly relevant but unfortunately the russian titles are still unkonown in the west. Fortunately we have now one or two works from Grigory Kogan translated. But still, in the piano concertizing profession, people rarely take the time to read about this kind of subject. Unfortunately again many piano teachers come up with their own methods withou prior knowledge of all this body work of research. Many guru-like methods and approaches intoxicate this literature market. I consider Kochevistky's book practical and exhaustive. You just have to take the time to think and to learn what he is talking about, and often this requires some experience and humbleness. Personally I recommend it highly to all advanced pianists and students.

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