

THE LEGACY OF THEODORE LESCHETIZKY AS SEEN THROUGH HIS PEDAGOGICAL REPERTOIRE
AND TEACHING STYLE

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Theodore Leschetizky's singular pianistic legacy survives to this day because of his revolutionary pedagogical methods and his compositions for the piano repertory. The amalgamation of these two aspects formed his distinctive contributions to the fields of piano and piano pedagogy and left an indelible mark on the history of the instrument. His students lead an impressive list of the greatest artists of the previous century, each influencing the evolution of pianism with their own remarkable style and personality. While Leschetizky was arguably without peer as a pedagogue, many pianists today are unaware of the vast number of compositions that he wrote. These pieces were intended not only for the concert stage, but also as a very specific pedagogical repertoire that he used within his own teaching studio. It is imperative that the pianists of our current generation understand the dual aspects of his contribution to our art form, in order to fully grasp the way in which he has changed the face of pianism. This dissertation serves as an individual, cohesive source that not only documents the characteristics of a pedagogical genius, but explores the legacy he left for future generations through documented accounts of his students and the examination of his own unfamiliar, pedagogical repertoire for the piano.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Theodore Leschetizky transformed the world of pianism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This was achieved, in part, through his students' dominant presence in the world's concert halls, his unconventional pedagogical developments, and his exceptional didactic works written for the piano. Some of his most notable pupils include Ethel Leginska, Ignace Paderewski, Benno Moiseiwitsch, Mark Hambourg, Mieczyslaw Horszowski, Alexander Brailowsky, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, Ignaz Friedman, and Arthur Schnabel. These pianists, among others, heralded what is often referred to as the Golden Age of the Piano. They constitute a vast part of Leschetizky's legacy, and it is a testament to his teaching style that so many diverse pianists could all be a product of the same teaching studio. Leschetizky's teaching methods were so extraordinarily innovative at the time because he refused to simply teach the physical or musical aspects of the instrument. He believed that there was "no life without art, no art without life"¹ and, as a result, appropriated a rather holistic, and unusually forward-thinking, methodology.

¹ Allan Evans. *Ignaz Friedman*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009, p. 41

This dissertation examines historic writings from Leschetizky's most prominent students and explores the ways in which he used his original compositions to address particular pianistic issues. Fortunately for today's pianists, many of his leading students have documented various components of his teaching style, which include his method of addressing specific technical and musical difficulties, both in practice and performance, as well as Leschetizky's distinctive approach to the psychology of his students. Regrettably, many of Leschetizky's compositions have been out of print since the beginning of the previous century. In this dissertation, I have chosen five specifically unique works that have been mentioned, even though in passing, in some of the various writings that have summarized Leschetizky's life and career. This chosen repertoire includes his *Two Meditations, Opus 19, Nos. 1 and 6, Mazurka, Opus 24, No. 2, Canzonetta Toscana, all'Antica, Opus 39, No. 3, and Jeu des ondes, Opus 40, No. 1.* Using particular elements known to be of importance in Leschetizky's teaching, I provide analysis and pedagogical insight into how he assimilated and integrated these ideas into his teaching process. These elements consist of a multiplicity of technical, musical and emotional ideas such as the correct use of the wrist, the appropriate use of the thumb in virtuosic passages, the balance of melody and accompaniment, accents within various dynamic shapes, freedom of rhythm, tone production and control, the psychology of interpretation, as well as the alteration of one's interpretation in regards to different performance venues.

There are currently five primary sources that deal with Leschetizky's life and his career as a teacher/composer. Published in 1904, the first of these references is *Theodore Leschetizky*,² a work written by his sister-in-law, Comtesse Angèle Potocka. It contains many details of interest, though mostly biographical ones, but could be considered psychologically biased considering the nature of the relationship between the author and her subject. Two of the other books, Ethel Newcomb's *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*³, and Annette Hullah's *Theodor Leschetizky*⁴, are written by women that spent many years studying with Leschetizky in Vienna. As Ethel Newcomb later served in the capacity of assistant, these books contain much psychological insight into Leschetizky, both the man and the teacher. These three references are written from a more informal viewpoint, almost in the form of a diary, intending to inspire the reader with fond memories that they had of the man they so lovingly referred to as "The Master."

Leschetizky's Fundamental Principles of Piano Technique by Marie Prentner⁵ is a handbook that expounds on the very detailed fundamentals of technique that Leschetizky imparted to his pupils. It contains exercises and drills relating to such techniques as scales, trills, chord playing, arpeggios, double notes, octaves, etc. There are also drawings of correct hand positions and examples of how to apply the

² Angèle Potocka. *Theodore Leschetizky: An intimate study of the man and the musician*. New York: The Century Company, 1903

³ Ethel Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1967

⁴ Annette Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1906

⁵ Marie Prentner. *Leschetizky's Fundamental Principles of Piano Technique*. Philadelphia: Theodore Presser Company, 1903

aforementioned techniques to specific musical repertoire that was in the mainstream at the time. These include references to Beethoven sonatas, as well as compositions by Schumann, Chopin, and Mendelssohn. The fifth and final source, *The Leschetizky Method, A Guide to Fine and Correct Piano Playing* by Malwine Brée⁶, attempts to document the elements of Leschetizky's "method." Of interesting note is the fact that, of all of the above sources, Brée's book was the only source that was endorsed by Leschetizky himself. Containing a variety of etudes and exercises, this reference is also unique in that it contains the only published photographs of Leschetizky's hands performing the examples in question. As Janos Cegledy notes in his article about Leschetizky, Malwine Brée's book "was written before detailed studies had been done of the physiology of piano playing and therefore, it is not surprising that, besides some good points, one finds inconsistencies and physically contradictory remarks."⁷ While it is often argued that Leschetizky did not have a "method," as he himself noted, it can be said that his method was simply a unique and individual approach to every student, both in terms of their physical development as well as their psychological growth.

⁶Malwine Brée. *Die Grundlage der Methode Leschetizky*. Mainz, Leipzig, London, Brussels, Paris, 1924

⁷ Janos Cegledy. Theodore Leschetizky's Teaching Methods. [article on-line], (Accessed 12 August 2009). Available from <http://www2.gol.com/users/cegedy/Leschmethod.htm>; Internet

CHAPTER 2

LIFE AND PEDAGOGICAL LINEAGE

Theodore Leschetizky (originally Leszetycki) was born on June 22, 1830, at the castle of Łańcut near Lwów, Poland. He was born to Josef Leschetizky and Theresé von Ullmann, a Bohemian and Pole respectively.⁸ His father had originally planned for a career in law but, possessing a rather artistic temperament, decided instead to pursue a musical vocation. He became employed in the court of Count Alfred Potocki as music teacher to his two young daughters, and it was in this environment that young Theodore was first introduced to the piano. He began formal lessons with his father, a strict disciplinarian, at the age of five, and was often asked to practice two hours a day at the onset of his musical studies. His early life was dichotomous in many aspects; his mother's strong involvement in his education was both poetic and empathic, while his father's approach was often rigid, constricted, and closely controlled. Leschetizky was a curious, inquisitive child whose innate strength of character often revealed itself in a certain inflexibility and intransigence.⁹

Leschetizky gave his first public concert at the age of nine, playing Czerny's *Concertino*. This would prove to be both significant and interesting, as Leschetizky commenced studies with Czerny only one year later when his father moved the family to Vienna. Leschetizky described Czerny's method of teaching as that of an "orchestral

⁸ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 1

⁹ Potocka. *Theodore Leschetizky: An intimate study of the man and the musician*, pg. 36-37

director”; he was dynamic, outspoken, and often used gestures as a way of communicating slight variations in tempo and tone color.¹⁰ Under Czerny’s tutelage, Leschetizky studied many of the great works of Bach and Beethoven, as well as many of Mendelssohn’s *Songs Without Words*. Czerny himself had been a student of Beethoven; this is noteworthy, not only in regards to pedagogical lineage, but also because it helped Leschetizky cultivate a great love of Beethoven’s compositions, an experience which would shape and mold his own viewpoints about interpretation and pedagogy. Above all, Czerny promoted “accuracy, brilliancy, and pianistic effects” while striving to help Leschetizky achieve a certain “freedom of delivery and depth of feeling.”¹¹

Following his studies with Czerny, the event that most affected Leschetizky’s musical perspectives was his encounter with the Bohemian pianist, Julius Schulhoff. He heard Schulhoff play at a reception in Vienna, and the encounter altered his ideas about technique, tone production, and musical interpretation. Leschetizky wrote that:

Under his hands the piano seemed like another instrument. Seated in a corner, my heart overflowing [*sic*] with indescribable emotions as I listened. Not a note escaped me. I began to foresee a new style of playing. That melody standing out in bold relief, that wonderful sonority—all this must be due to a new and entirely different touch. And that cantabile, a legato such as I had not dreamed possible on the piano, a human voice rising above the sustaining harmonies!¹²

As a result of this meeting, Leschetizky began realizing what musical and pianistic elements were lacking in his own playing. He began actively trying to expunge this

¹⁰ Ibid., pg. 51

¹¹ Ibid., pg. 51

¹² Ibid., pg. 91

“incompleteness”¹³ that he felt was prevalent, all the while seeking to codify these various concepts into a tangible system of ideas that he could use to affect both his own playing as well as his students’. He realized that while there are certain technical elements necessary in the manufacturing of tone production (firm finger tips, flexible wrist), his was not a search for the “perfect finger,” but a much greater ideology.¹⁴ Schulhoff’s use of a wide range of sonorities, his simple and poetic approach to pianism, and the beauty and depth of his interpretation influenced Leschetizky’s beliefs and opinions about music and, as a result, affected future generations of his pupils.¹⁵

In the early 1850s, Leschetizky began to feel the need to work with a larger and more diverse group of students and, as a result, he relocated to St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1852. It was at this time that he met his first wife, a singer named Anna de Friedebourg, and they were married in February 1856. Leschetizky then became the musical inspector at the Smolna Institute, a musical institution that provided education for the children of nobility.¹⁶ As his renown began to increase, students began arriving from provinces all across Russia seeking the opportunity to study with him. The demand eventually became so great that Leschetizky was forced to train some of his own pupils to function in the role of preparatory teachers, or Vorbereiters, as they were then known.¹⁷ This was a system that would ultimately hold a great deal of significance; it

¹³ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 5

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 6

¹⁵ Potocka. *Theodore Leschetizky: An intimate study of the man and the musician*, pg. 89

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 212

¹⁷ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 12

became an integral part of the organization of Leschetizky's teaching studio and an invaluable means of teaching both the technical and musical fundamentals of pianism.

He believed this system

to be advantageous to both the teacher and pupil, especially the latter; and that through it the most satisfactory results are obtainable. The Vorbereiter and scholar stand more or less on a footing of equality, or at least on a plane where intimacy may exist-an encouragement to candid questioning, and a freedom from the element of fear...¹⁸

The St. Petersburg Conservatory was opened in 1862, with Anton Rubinstein as musical director, and the constituency of the original class was formed from Leschetizky's private studio, as well as that of one of his colleagues, Madame Saloman Nissen.¹⁹ It was at the conservatory that Leschetizky began teaching a young woman who would eventually become his second wife, Annette Essipova.²⁰ Although she was significantly influenced by her personal and professional relationships with Leschetizky, she would also develop into a major artist and teacher in her own right. Their close relationship and the depth of both their musical and personal involvement played a large part in the disintegration of his first marriage.²¹

In 1878, both Theodore and Annette became ill with typhoid fever and it was this, along with his father's declining health, which prompted his decision to return to Vienna. It was here that Leschetizky carried out the majority of his teaching and made perhaps his most significant contributions to piano pedagogy. At this point in history,

¹⁸ Potocka. *Theodore Leschetizky: An intimate study of the man and the musician*, pg. 214-215

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 218

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 219, 226

²¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 226-227

Vienna's musical landscape was undergoing a transformation. It was no longer a city of empty virtuosi but a cosmopolitan metropolis filled with artists and composers, one that could count as its inhabitants such luminary figures as Johann Strauss and Johannes Brahms.²² No doubt influenced by an environment of such musical wealth, Leschetizky founded the Ton-Künstler Verein, a musical society that would gather for the purpose of performance and discussion of new works.²³ This circle of performers, composers, philosophers, and intellectuals provided a great motivation for Leschetizky and helped to shape the more humanistic, truth-seeking elements of his musical and psychological views on teaching.

In 1887, Leschetizky concluded his solo career with a performance of Beethoven's *Concerto in E-flat Major*. He wanted to allocate the remainder of his time to his pupils although this proved to be a difficult decision, due in part to his belief that being before the public was necessary for the evolution and growth of one's artistic persona.²⁴ In 1892, he and Essipova divorced and, over the next several decades, Leschetizky would remarry two more times. For the majority of his life, he remained in Vienna, attracting hundreds of students from all over the world, all the while working tirelessly to implement the various details and complexities that would make up one of the most radical and far-reaching methods of piano pedagogy that the world has known.

²² Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 20

²³ Potocka. *Theodore Leschetizky: An intimate study of the man and the musician*, p. 258

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 264

While there are most definitely certain intrinsic qualities that define an exceptional pedagogue, it is equally important to be acquainted with an individual's personal experiences as they relate to the dissemination of common, shared ideas that are passed down through one's musical heirs. In understanding Leschetizky's contributions to pianistic history, we, as pedagogues of the twenty-first century, must recognize the three primary influences on what became known as "the Leschetizky method." First and foremost were his experiences with Czerny who, as a student of Beethoven, was able to impart and convey the all important aspect of historical tradition, both in terms of musical interpretation and pedagogical lineage. Leschetizky's encounter with Julius Schulhoff engendered in him a certain element of self-actualization, causing him to question the mechanics of tone production and the means by which one can create certain pianistic effects and sonorities. And finally, Leschetizky's involvement with the Ton-Künstler Verein in Vienna provided the essential element of humanity, in which all art forms are intertwined and the circulation of knowledge involves both the giving and receiving of information.²⁵

²⁵ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 33

CHAPTER 3

THE MAN AS TEACHER

In order to fully comprehend Leschetizky's inimitable approach to teaching, one must first understand both the inherent characteristics that defined his humanity and then grasp how those qualities shaped the distinctive psychological tactics that he would employ with his students.

Theodore Leschetizky was a man full of vitality and life, one who appreciated the aesthetic of beauty above all else. He was patient, sincere, and strong-willed, rarely tolerating sadness or frivolity. Yet, as is also the case with his vast pedagogical and compositional legacy, he was a man with many contrasting components to his personality. While his sense of perception and insight were such an intricate part of his characteristics as a teacher, Leschetizky the man was sensitive and vulnerable, often easily upset by perceived criticism of either his playing or his personal life. He could be sarcastic, stubborn, often dejected, and yet honest to a fault in his pursuit of excellence. From his students, he demanded nothing less than utter devotion and loyalty, insisting on a developed work ethic and believing this, along with a certain flexibility of temperament, to be the primary indicator of one's success.²⁶

It has been written that Leschetizky thought of his students as his immediate family.²⁷ While serving as an obvious technical and musical guide, he also filled the roles

²⁶ Ibid., pg. 82-84

²⁷ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, p. 15

of mentor, therapist, father-figure, sponsor, and overall general caretaker for his pupils. He believed that in order to promote artistic longevity, he, in his various roles, must cultivate not only a complete and whole pianist, but a human being as well.

One of Leschetizky's most prominent qualities was his extreme interest in the well-being of his students.²⁸ Annette Hullah noted that "his chief care was that each pupil entrusted to him should develop to the best of his ability."²⁹ This deep-seeded desire for his students to mature into well-rounded artists involved the nurturing of not only pianistic ideals, but principles of the mind and the soul as well. For Leschetizky believed that in order to become successful in music, one must also be successful in other matters of life.³⁰

As Leschetizky trusted that artistry and humanity were inextricably linked, he often involved himself in his students' extra-musical affairs, in order to guide them towards what he believed to be a higher musical and ethical plane. This involvement often manifested itself in his serious concern about such matters as parental involvement, romantic relationships, how his students spent their free time, and their manner of dress. This stemmed not only from Leschetizky's great sense of responsibility that he felt towards each and every student, but also from a particular inquisitiveness that he felt about most things within his sphere of influence.³¹

²⁸ Ibid., p. viii

²⁹ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 13

³⁰ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, pg. 54

³¹ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 76

Leschetizky believed strongly in the use of a disciplined approach to pedagogy and, as a result, was often troubled by his students' parents, especially the guardians of the young children he taught. Certain parents, often overly enamored with their young one's perceived talent, can become exceedingly self-indulgent in their raising and treatment of the child. It was this behavior that Leschetizky thought created a false sense of self-worth, a quality that he believed to be detrimental to the students' musical and ethical development.³² For he believed that people have an instinctive awareness of their own limitations, and only by accepting one's strengths and weaknesses can the student come to possess a true and genuine view of themselves.³³ It was of the utmost necessity that every student be allowed to "have the satisfaction of discovering what they *can* do, as well as what they *cannot* do."³⁴ However, when confronted with a parent of a contrasting disposition, one who was authoritarian and controlling with their child, Leschetizky would often take a different tact. Once, he encountered a mother who was hesitant to leave her son in Vienna for an extended period of time because she was afraid he would spend too much time socializing in the cafés of Vienna. "But, Professor, he will become fond of the ladies," she commented, to which Leschetizky responded, "I only hope so."³⁵ While he understood the importance of discipline in the pursuit of artistry, he also held resolutely to the conviction that artistic maturity and life experiences were inextricably linked. Although often aggravated by intrusive and

³² Ibid., pg. 54-55

³³ Ibid., pg. 61

³⁴ Ibid., pg. 47

³⁵ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, pg. 72

interfering parents, Leschetizky did realize the unbreakable bond that existed between parent and child and, if at all possible, worked to strengthen the familial bond, in order that the student may benefit from a myriad of loving relationships. For, as he said to Ethel Newcomb, "You will see that if you are serious in your music your parents may become your best friends."³⁶

Leschetizky recognized that artistic dispositions are generally more sensitive than other temperaments and, as a result, are often susceptible to what he perceived as bad influences. He would often exhibit a tremendous amount of concern over his students' personal relationships, ones of both a platonic and romantic nature. He often felt that these companions were an impediment to his pupils' musical growth, and frequently held them responsible for any lack of development that his pupils experienced. One such incident involved one of Leschetizky's young female students, who had become friends and roommates with an older woman who was very controlling and manipulative in her relationship with Leschetizky's young ward. His pupil was not allowed to read anything other than specific works about music, she was required to teach a Sunday school class, and she was also forbidden to speak to any Viennese gentlemen. Eventually, Leschetizky tired of the situation and said, "But, my dear child, get as far away from such people as possible; they are not for artists; such people drag you down. An artist must look up and not down. If art is worth anything it is to keep you from becoming sordid and narrow. Get as far away as possible from such

³⁶ Ibid., pg. 85

people.”³⁷ Leschetizky was adamant that his students surround themselves with people who were sympathetic to their aspirations-friends and companions who would nurture and encourage his pupils, rather than thwart and hinder their ambitions and character growth.

A large majority of Leschetizky’s students traveled great distances to Vienna in order to study with “The Master.” They came from countries such as the United States of America, Britain, France, Sweden, Italy, and Russia. For many of them, moving such great distances and leaving their families behind was an enormous sacrifice, one which revealed to Leschetizky a great deal about their level of dedication. It was for this reason that he was incredibly cognizant about the financial strain that tuition and life in a new city could cause for these young people. Leschetizky was often known to be extremely generous financially, especially with the most deserving students, when he felt like the situation required his intervention. One such example concerns a young male student who was in a constant state of financial hardship. Each week as the student arrived at his lesson, Leschetizky would take his fee and keep it off to the side, adding to it week by week. At the end of the young boy’s time of study, when he was ready to go out into the world and begin to make a career, Leschetizky gave him all of the money back, referring to it as “just a souvenir” of his time in Vienna.³⁸ For many other students, specifically those that had studied with him for an extended period of time, lessons were often free. To Leschetizky, this was an indication of the closeness

³⁷ Ibid., pg. 78-79

³⁸ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 76

that he had developed and nurtured with his students. If the student raised an inquiry about compensation for the lessons, Leschetizky would often be known to respond, “Am I not your friend, then? Why do you bring me this?”³⁹ Although his generosity was often without bounds, Leschetizky was also known to comment if he felt like a student was spending unwisely. One such student who Leschetizky believed to be guilty of overeager spending was promptly chastised. “This is not good at all. The first money you earned should have gone into the bank for serious purposes.”⁴⁰ He was constantly striving for ways in which he could influence his students, always looking for the moral in every experience.

For pedagogues of the twenty-first century, a retrospective look at Leschetizky’s psychological and personal interactions with his students provides a great number of answers and solutions and, interestingly enough, also puts forward a considerable amount of questions. In today’s universities and conservatories, Leschetizky’s unique and atypical level of involvement with his students would most certainly have its detractors, those who would view his unusual methods with cynicism and suspicion. Certain behavior and particular emotional attachments might even be considered inappropriate or improper. But what cannot be denied is the extraordinary sense of responsibility that Leschetizky felt not only to each student that was before him, but also to his art form in general. He believed that true artistic longevity was only possible when students were well-rounded individuals with the highest of standards-musically,

³⁹ Ibid., pg. 76

⁴⁰ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, pg. 94

emotionally, and mentally-and it is for this reason that he engaged with his students on every level, teaching the mind and the soul as well as the fingers.

CHAPTER 4

THE “NON-METHOD”

The idiosyncrasies of Leschetizky’s teaching style pose the question of whether or not he had a specific and particular “method” that he applied in the instruction of his students. The term “method” implies a certain number of logical, systematic steps that one would apply in order to reach a desired goal or objective. In this sense, the current definition does not apply to Leschetizky’s educational philosophies and, as Ethel Newcomb noted, the term “method” is far too restrictive to provide any representative picture of his teaching process⁴¹. As previously mentioned, his was a personal and individualistic approach, one that was often exclusive to whichever student was in front of him at the time.⁴² Leschetizky himself said:

I have no technical method; there are certain ways of producing certain effects, and I have found those which succeed best; but I have no iron rules. How is it possible one should have them? One pupil needs this, another that; the hand of each differs; the brain of each differs. There can be no rule. I am a doctor to whom my pupils come as patients to be cured of their musical ailments, and the remedy must vary in each case. There is but one part of my teaching that may be called a ‘Method,’ if you like; and that is the way in which I teach my pupils to learn a piece of music. This is invariably the same for all, whether artist or little child.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid., pg. vii

⁴² Ibid., pg. 55

⁴³ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 41-42

His goal was simply to teach the student to realize and attain what was essential in order to achieve an effective interpretation; if this was accomplished, the manner in which it was done was quite irrelevant.⁴⁴

The majority of the technical ideas that have come to be associated with Leschetizky's "method" were, in fact, collected and codified by the preparatory teachers (Vorbereiters), namely Malwine Breé and Marie Prentner. These concepts were then organized and assembled into a compilation of exercises and etudes that were used to instruct the students, in order to properly train them for Leschetizky's eventual tutelage.⁴⁵ Leschetizky's overriding view of technique was simply that it was a "means to an end"; he himself noted that it "was of very little value in itself, and was useful only as a means of expressing beauty."⁴⁶ However, there are a few consistent elements that can be noted in his technical approach. He was known to believe that good posture, a student's bearing at the piano, was of fundamental importance in terms of one's ability to provide a clear and easy execution. He believed in utter simplicity and efficiency in terms of movement, and was notorious for abhorring any type of wasted motion, as well as any sign of affectation or histrionics. Such motion, he alleged, sufficed only to divert the audiences' attention onto the performer, and there was no place in art for such narcissism.⁴⁷ From a more mechanical standpoint, he advocated complete independence of finger, wrist, and arm, believing that each part must be able to move

⁴⁴ Ibid., pg. 34

⁴⁵ Ibid., pg. 41

⁴⁶ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, pg. 11

⁴⁷ Potocka. *Theodore Leschetizky: An intimate study of the man and the musician*, pg. 290, 306

autonomously without affecting the others' ability to execute. Annette Hullah summarizes Leschetizky's philosophies on technical growth as an emphasis on "the development of strength and sensitiveness in the finger-tips; clear distinction between the many varieties of touch; the necessity of an immaculate pedalling."⁴⁸

While there are undoubtedly technical elements in Leschetizky's pedagogical method, it is perhaps a more accurate statement, as he himself noted, that the primary intent of his methodology is to train a student in the most proficient and effective way to examine and analyze music. Hullah defines Leschetizky's system as one "which makes its primary aim the study of the music written for the piano; its second, that of the effects to be obtained from the instrument; its third the development of the hand."⁴⁹ From the beginning, Leschetizky encouraged learning a new piece in the smallest possible unit, i.e., measure by measure, or phrase by phrase, depending on the musical structure. The student must be deliberate and purposeful in regards to fingerings, dynamic markings, variations of touch and tone, and all of the various minutiae that together form the overall composition and spirit of the piece. Of significant note is the fact that Leschetizky advocated immediate memorization, even while the student was still in the initial stages of learning a new piece. He believed that only when every element of a piece was not merely learned, but truly understood, could a performer attempt to guarantee its accurate re-creation before an audience.⁵⁰ In

⁴⁸ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 42

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 40

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 44-45

lessons, Leschetizky would often insist that the student be able to begin at any random measure, and it was only when the pupil could accomplish this task that Leschetizky would be able to discern their linear comprehension of the piece that they were studying.⁵¹

In many skills that involve a certain element of physicality, such as the study of a musical instrument, it is undisputed that repetition is necessary in order to improve one's level of proficiency. However, Leschetizky encouraged repetition not for the sake of the fingers, but for the sake of phrasing and musical intention. Ethel Newcomb describes a method of practice that Leschetizky would often utilize in the lessons, one which involved a plate of beans and an empty plate.

First one had to idealize the phrase-hear it played with all the taste and beauty imaginable. Then, if it was played correctly, a bean was transferred to the empty plate. Another attempt, if successful, brought a second bean to join the first, and so on, until all the beans were transferred to the once empty plate. But if the phrase went badly just once, all the beans had to go back, and the process began afresh. It was a splendid lesson in concentration and worked beautifully, not only with children, but with grown-ups as well, who were in the habit of repeating a phrase over and over again, never stopping to think of improving it before repetition.⁵²

In tandem with this idea, he would often have his students play only the first portion of a phrase, "then stop and listen to it over again without playing it."⁵³ If a student could accurately and honestly hear the way they had played the first part of a phrase, they would have a much better perception of how the phrase should sound in its entirety.

⁵¹ Ibid., pg. 44-45

⁵² Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, pg. 17-18

⁵³ Ibid., pg. 17-18

For Leschetizky was of the firm belief that it is only through retrospective analysis that one will truly learn how to proceed. This was a skill that he deemed necessary for each and every student because it impacted not only their ability to phrase, but also their capability to reflect and comprehend their life's choices, which in turn dictated their future paths.

It has been written that Leschetizky himself never practiced more than three hours a day, even at the height of his performance career.⁵⁴ In fact, he believed that practicing excessively impeded the vitality of the nervous system, actually slowing one's mental faculties.⁵⁵ Accordingly, he recommended that his students practice at the instrument for a maximum of four or five hours a day. However, he was often overheard advising his students that "one's best study could be done away from the piano. One could more easily imagine the beauties of music...than one could reveal them in actual playing."⁵⁶ He suggested to them that for every hour they spend practicing, they spend another hour in thought away from the instrument.⁵⁷ This corroborates his previously mentioned ideas about memory and comprehension, for only when a student can visualize every detail and nuance of the musical structure do they truly understand its significance.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Potocka. *Theodore Leschetizky: An intimate study of the man and the musician*, pg. 92

⁵⁵ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 48

⁵⁶ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, pg. 18

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 42

⁵⁸ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 44.

Leschetizky would teach an average of three lessons per day, the length depending on a variety of factors including the student's level of talent, their preparation, and his current frame of mind. Students that had studied with him for at least two years were recognized as his most "qualified pupils."⁵⁹ He expected students to make certain alterations and corrections instantly and the lessons often had a certain element of immediacy to them as a result. For, to Leschetizky, "to understand is to be able to do."⁶⁰

In assessing his students' various character traits, Leschetizky valued a stirring imagination and a highly developed work ethic above all else. It is for this reason that he so treasured his students' life experiences, for he knew the inexorable connection between life and art; his pupil's various life encounters imbued their musical choices with color and depth. What he considered to be the most heinous mistakes, and those for which he had the least patience, were unmusical phrasing and the inability to "listen to one's own playing."⁶¹ "To listen," "always to listen," and "to open one's ears" are sayings that were often very popular in Leschetizky's lessons.⁶² In measuring and gauging a student's level of commitment and dedication, he defined good work as follows:

First, an absolutely clear comprehension of the principal points to be studied in the music on hand; a clear perception of where the difficulties lie, and of the way in which to conquer them; the mental realisation [*sic*] of these three facts *before*

⁵⁹ Ibid., pg. 51-52

⁶⁰ Ibid., pg.56

⁶¹ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, pg. 29

⁶² Ibid., pg 16

they are carried out by the hands. Decide exactly *what* it is you want to do in the first place; then *how* you will do it; then play it. Stop and think if you played it in the way you meant to do; then only, if sure of this, go ahead. Without concentration, remember, you can do nothing. The brain must guide the fingers, not the fingers the brain.⁶³

The qualities and traits of the Leschetizky method are remarkably similar to the characteristics that Leschetizky exhibited in his own life. He took a unique and individual approach to each student, much as he did with each of his own experiences. Possessing an astonishing gift for assessment, he analyzed each student independently, evaluating not only their musical and technical strengths and deficiencies, but their character traits as well. He believed that students should be serious about their artistry, but that life was meant to be pleasurable and fulfilling; these convictions colored each and every encounter with his students.⁶⁴ He considered tonal production to be of primary importance, both in revealing the music's significance and in illuminating the spirit of the performer. Leschetizky cared more about the eventual product, both musical and personal, than he did about any system of axioms or rules. It is for this reason that he resisted the codification of his ideas into a "method"; the creation of a set of guidelines did not result in the creation of art.⁶⁵ In actuality, the Leschetizky "method" was re-invented and altered, ever changing with each new student.

⁶³ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 49-50

⁶⁴ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, pg. 63

⁶⁵ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 50

CHAPTER 5

LESCHETIZKY'S PEDAGOGICAL LEGACY

To truly grasp Leschetizky's pedagogical legacy, one must understand both the sheer volume of students that he taught, as well as the quality of artistry that his students demonstrated. Leschetizky himself understood the significance of his role when he said, "People forget the artists who have only played, but pupils carry on the teacher's memory."⁶⁶ It is conceivable then that Leschetizky realized, to some extent, the way in which his pupils would impact pianism in the twentieth century. It has been documented that there are certain qualities that Leschetizky's students possessed, including "emphasized rhythm, clearness of tone, inaudible pedalling, [and] brilliance in staccato passages."⁶⁷ While this is most certainly true, it can be argued that the most defining quality of his pupils is a clear and distinctive approach to tonal production. As one can imagine, understanding the great value that Leschetizky placed on individualism, his students developed into mature, unique artists with very diverse senses of style and musicianship. While it is entirely impossible to pay tribute to each great pianist that emerged from Leschetizky's studio, I have chosen a representative few who epitomize Leschetizky's pedagogical legacy.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pg. 91

⁶⁷ Ibid., pg. 40

Ethel Leginska (1886-1970), a British pianist, was significant not only because she is a part of Leschetizky's pedagogical lineage, but also because she altered the way in which women were perceived in certain artistic fields. She had a comprehensive career in music at a time when women were often considered amateurs. She was originally born Ethel Annie Leggins, but her name was changed by managers and advisers who felt that a Slavic name would promote a more cosmopolitan image.⁶⁸ During her three years of study with Leschetizky in Vienna, she also met the man who would become her future husband and manager. She returned to London to great renown, although she eventually relocated to the United States where she made her New York debut in 1913.⁶⁹ She was notorious for her fiery temperament, in addition to possessing a brilliant technical facility.⁷⁰ Leginska was fond of creating recital programs dedicated to one composer, and she would give entire recitals devoted to the music of Brahms, Chopin, Liszt, and Schumann.⁷¹ In her role as an advocate for women in music, she gained a reputation for having a strong way of asserting her rather unique opinions. She was often very outspoken about a performer's inability to balance family and professional life; for women, this was especially detrimental due to what she perceived as a very severe gender bias. She revolutionized the perceptions of appropriate concert

⁶⁸ Beth Abelson Macleod. *Women Performing Music-The Emergence of American Women as Instrumentalists and Conductors*. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2001, pg. 96

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 97

⁷⁰ David Dubal. *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1989, pg. 149

⁷¹ Macleod. *Women Performing Music-The Emergence of American Women as Instrumentalists and Conductors*, pg. 100

dress for women, as she was often known to emerge onstage wearing a vest and tuxedo.⁷² Later in life, she became interested in conducting and composition, and her performance with the New York Symphony in 1925 represented the first time one of the foremost American orchestras was conducted by a woman.⁷³ Over the next several decades, she founded and conducted numerous organizations dedicated to the advancement of women in music, including the Boston Women's Symphony, the Women's Symphony of Chicago, and the National Women's Symphony.⁷⁴ Due in part to a lack of financial support for such organizations, she relocated to Los Angeles in 1940 and spent the next 30 years teaching quite a large number of students, many of whom are currently on the faculties of universities and conservatories across the United States. One notices her pedagogical lineage particularly upon realizing the great satisfaction she received from this part of her very multi-faceted career. She said, "I don't know why teaching is considered by so many to be drudgery. To me it is most interesting. I find the same joy in diagnosing and prescribing for a pupil's difficulties that a physician finds in prescribing for a patient."⁷⁵

Ignace Paderewski (1860-1941) was a Polish pianist who came to study with Leschetizky in 1885, at the relatively late age of twenty-four. This realization, late in life, of his musical desires is certainly not representative of his instinctual and natural gifts for musical poetry, stage presence, and tonal manipulation. At Paderewski's debut in

⁷² Ibid., pg. 98, 100-101

⁷³ Ibid., pg. 109

⁷⁴ Ibid., pg. 119-120

⁷⁵ Ibid., pg. 121

Vienna, Leschetizky was overheard saying to a member of the audience, “Ah, my dear.....you will have to get used to hearing that young man’s name.”⁷⁶ Of interest is the fact that Leschetizky deemed Paderewski to be the most “docile” of his students, a trait that eventually helped lead the two into a magnificent friendship.⁷⁷ Paderewski studied with Leschetizky for two years, eventually leaving to take a teaching position in Strassburg. Although he later returned to Vienna for another period of study, this too was interrupted by concert engagements abroad.⁷⁸ Paderewski’s loyalty to Leschetizky was further evidenced by his frequent, and often generous, financial gifts to many of Leschetizky’s students; these stipends ensured their continued study and also provided them with orchestral engagements.⁷⁹ Of significant note is that fact that Paderewski contributed a chapter entitled “Practical Hints on Piano Study” to Malwine Bree’s handbook on the Leschetizky method.⁸⁰ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Paderewski was arguably the most sought after pianist in the world of classical music, his playing characterized by a warm vibrant tone and an engaging use of rubato. With a charming personality, attractive countenance, and a tireless constitution, he travelled the world performing countless concerts. He made an exceptional impact in the United States, where he made classical pianism accessible to the great number of

⁷⁶ Potocka. *Theodore Leschetizky: An intimate study of the man and the musician*, pg. 260

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 260

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 264

⁷⁹ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, pg. 164

⁸⁰ Brée. *Die Grundlage der Methode Leschetizky*, pg. 90-92

American people desiring “culture.”⁸¹ He became known as the “heart of Poland,”⁸² being recognized not only for his artistic contributions but also for his patriotic spirit. At the onset of World War I, Paderewski himself arranged an army, numbering in the thousands, of Polish people to fight for the Allied cause. He was instrumental in many of Poland’s diplomatic relations with other countries, and after the war’s end he became the first prime minister of Poland.⁸³ There is no greater example of Leschetizky’s belief that one’s character qualities and moral fiber inform one’s playing than Paderewski. For as Margeurite Long noted, he served as an example in word and deed; he was “the sovereign of the piano...everything in his makeup, as in his art, was noble and grand.”⁸⁴

Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890-1963) was a British pianist of Ukrainian birth who went to Vienna to study with Leschetizky at the age of fourteen. Although originally from Odessa, Moiseiwitsch eventually became a citizen of England after his family relocated there when his studies with Leschetizky were complete.⁸⁵ Like many of Leschetizky’s students, his musical phrasing possessed an inherent flexibility, supplemented by a seemingly infinite variety of tonal variations.⁸⁶ He excelled in the Romantic repertoire, exhibiting a very special affinity for pieces of a more lyrical nature.

⁸¹ Dubal. *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*, pg. 188

⁸² Ibid., pg. 190

⁸³ Ibid., pg. 189

⁸⁴ Ibid., pg. 189

⁸⁵ William Mann. “Moiseiwitsch, Benno” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 16, ed. by Stanley Sadie. London, New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2001, pg. 885

⁸⁶ Dubal. *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*, pg. 174

He shone especially brightly in his interpretations of Rachmaninoff, and it is known that the composer himself was a great admirer of Moiseiwitsch's readings.⁸⁷

One of the earliest recollections of Mark Hambourg's (1879-1960) playing was an account detailed by Annette Hullah upon first hearing Hambourg play in Vienna. She remarked, "Now began the really exciting part of the evening, for it was little Mark Hambourg's turn...Mark excelled himself to-night [sic] and put everyone else in the shade. There seems to be nothing he cannot do, and his electricity is absolutely phenomenal...Professor turned round to us and murmured, 'He has a future-he *can* play.'"⁸⁸ Hambourg, of Russian birth, studied with Leschetizky for a period of four years during adolescence, so one can assume that this account occurred during those most formative years. Regarding his experience with Leschetizky, Hambourg recalls:

Of course, it was from that great teacher, Leschetizky, that I learned most everything, not only pertaining to piano playing, but in regard to every aspect of how to live. As for a pianoforte lesson with him, it was a life experience, if one was capable of understanding what he wanted; and he had a wonderful way of explaining every detail with the utmost precision and care. He was not only marvelous at developing facility and brilliance of execution in his pupils, but also focused his teaching enormously on the quality of sound produced. Everything had to be beautiful and polished with him, and alive with the right kind of expression and feeling. He never allowed anything to pass his judgment that was dull, monotonous, or harsh in tone production...⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibid., pg. 174

⁸⁸ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 70-71

⁸⁹ Allan Evans. "The Hambourg Legacy." *Piano and Keyboard* 191(March-April 1998): 34

He left Leschetizky to pursue a concert career, giving his first world tour shortly thereafter.⁹⁰ His playing contained extraordinary elements of virtuosity and it was Leschetizky who commented, “You play more like Anton Rubinstein than any pianist I have ever heard.”⁹¹

Mieczyslaw Horszowski (1892-1993), while a part of Leschetizky’s studio in Vienna, was affectionately referred to by his peers as one of Leschetizky’s “little ones.”⁹² Horszowski, of Polish origin, was one of Leschetizky’s youngest pupils during his tenure in Vienna, beginning his studies there at the age of seven.⁹³ Even among his older colleagues, he was revered for his quick ability to assimilate each and every concept or idea that Leschetizky imparted. Ethel Newcomb noted that Horszowski “ran home as soon as his mind grasped one fundamental of technique or tone, and incorporated it into every piece that he knew, turning it over in his philosophical little great brain until every possibility was grasped.”⁹⁴ When asked to reminisce about his lessons with Leschetizky, Horszowski observed that Leschetizky would work specifically on curved finger tips and a low wrist, as well as assigning certain etudes, Czerny’s etudes Op. 299 and Op. 740, as a means by which the mechanism can be kept loose and flexible.⁹⁵ As a performer and recording artist, Horszowski was recognized for his sympathetic

⁹⁰ Frank Dawes. “Mark Hambourg” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 10, ed. by Stanley Sadie. London, New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2001, pg. 713

⁹¹ Dubal. *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*, pg. 108

⁹² Potocka. *Theodore Leschetizky: An intimate study of the man and the musician*, pg. 302

⁹³ James Methuen-Campbell. “Horszowski, Mieczyslaw” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 11, ed. by Stanley Sadie. London, New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2001, pg. 743

⁹⁴ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, pg. 127

⁹⁵ Robert Dumm. “Horszowski Remembers Vienna and Great Pianists of the Past”. *Clavier* 41:9 (November 2002): 28

performances of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Chopin. Equally sought after as a chamber musician, he frequently collaborated with the cellist Pablo Casals.⁹⁶ He continued performing later in life, with much aplomb, and also dedicated himself to teaching, instructing future generations of artists at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. His connection to Leschetizky is especially noteworthy; Horszowski was the longest surviving of Leschetizky's students and, with his death in 1993, pianists of the twentieth century lost the last lingering connection to the celebrated pedagogue.⁹⁷

Alexander Brailowsky (1896-1976) was an American pianist of Ukrainian birth, who first studied at the Kiev Conservatory before commencing his studies with Leschetizky.⁹⁸ As a recitalist, he was the first to perform Chopin's entire repertoire in a public concert. He was often criticized for having a less than virtuosic technique, as well as a rather rigid approach to musical line. Nonetheless, he exhibited a career of some longevity, and was known for his tireless efforts to overcome any physical limitations that he possessed.⁹⁹ What he does represent, for these purposes, is the summation of Leschetizky's philosophy that one's extra-musical experiences are revealed in one's emotional state and the resulting musical choices. He reflects:

Genuine lasting success at the keyboard is not nearly so much a matter of fingers as it is of a highly trained intelligence, broad human experience, deep emotions, world sympathy, love for the beautiful, and the culture that comes with the

⁹⁶ James Methuen-Campbell. "Horszowski, Mieczyslaw" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 11, ed. by Stanley Sadie. London, New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2001, pg. 743

⁹⁷ Dubal. *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*, pg. 127

⁹⁸ James Methuen-Campbell. "Brailowsky, Alexander" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 4, ed. by Stanley Sadie. London, New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2001, pg. 230

⁹⁹ Dubal. *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*, pg. 38

highly educated gentleman...The virtuoso becomes the property of his art and of his public. He is a missionary of the musical gospel. He must consecrate himself to all that is fine and lofty and beautiful in life. These things he transmutes into musical interpretations.¹⁰⁰

It has been documented that Leschetizky considered Ossip Gabrilowitsch (1878-1936) to be, along with Paderewski and Essipova, one of the greatest representations of his teaching.¹⁰¹ Prior to Gabrilowitsch's studies with Leschetizky, he was educated in St. Petersburg with Anton Rubinstein. While in Vienna, he became fascinated with composing, and Leschetizky heralded many of his pieces as works of the highest order.¹⁰² Upon relocation to the United States in 1918, he was named conductor of the Detroit Symphony, spending the remainder of his life in that post. One of his most innovative contributions to classical programming of the era was his performances, on consecutive evenings, of multiple piano concertos. His recorded legacy, while small in quantity, is certainly not representative of his role in the musical life of early nineteenth century America.¹⁰³ In recounting his time with Leschetizky, Gabrilowitsch wrote, "What Leschetizky was concerned about was the meaning of a composition as a whole, its poetic message and musical construction, then the beauty of tone with which it could be expressed..."¹⁰⁴

Ignaz Friedman (1882-1951), a Polish pianist, achieved prominence as a performer, teacher, composer, and editor. He appeared to possess all the qualities that

¹⁰⁰ John Joswick. "Alexander Brailowsky's Centennial". *Clavier* 35:5 (May-June 1996): 17

¹⁰¹ George Woodhouse. "How Leschetizky Taught". *Music and Letters* 35:3 (July 1954): 226

¹⁰² Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, pg. 118

¹⁰³ Dubal. *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*, pg. 87-88

¹⁰⁴ Evans. *Ignaz Friedman*, pg. 41

Leschetizky appreciated in a pianist-a virtuosic technique, a widely varied tonal palette, and an inherent acoustical understanding of tonal projection.¹⁰⁵ Interestingly enough, Leschetizky first advised Friedman to pursue a different vocation. Nevertheless, Friedman persevered and eventually became one of the most recognized names on the concert stage, performing over three thousand recitals during the course of his career.¹⁰⁶ Friedman is perhaps the greatest example of Leschetizky's teaching on tonal production; he possessed a warm, golden tone that was the envy of many pianists of his time. Friedman stated, "In all of his teaching, Leschetizky paid more attention to tone than to technic [*sic*], quite the opposite to the opinion generally held. He would often shout at me in the course of a lesson 'tone, tone, tone! Always more TONE!'"¹⁰⁷ Friedman's recordings, of such composers as Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Liszt, are an astounding representation of the Romantic tradition that was popular at the time. They possess an astute rhythmic control, the previously mentioned ability for tonal management, a simple poetic quality and yet, often, a certain impulsivity of character.¹⁰⁸ As an editor, his editions of Chopin's and Liszt's compositions are worth mentioning due to some very intricate and inventive pedaling.¹⁰⁹ As a composer, his output totals more than one hundred various compositions and, in his role as one of Leschetizky's many successors, he evolved into a highly respected teacher, bringing to

¹⁰⁵ Dubal. *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*, pg. 85

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 85

¹⁰⁷ Allan Evans. *Ignaz Friedman*, pg. 41

¹⁰⁸ Dubal. *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*, pg. 86

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 85

fruition Leschetizky's idea that the greatest musicians master many facets of the genre.¹¹⁰

Arthur Schnabel (1882-1951), an Austrian pianist, was a young child when his family moved to Vienna. Schnabel described Leschetizky's specific methodologies as "like a current which sought to release all latent vitality in the student."¹¹¹ Schnabel was born into an era when audiences demanded bravura and towering displays of virtuosity, but his personal style was distinctly antithetical to these requests. His was a more cerebral, intellectual approach, although certainly not lacking in emotional depth.¹¹² Leschetizky was instinctively aware of these traits and remarked to Schnabel, "You will never be a pianist; you are a musician."¹¹³ Leschetizky in turn allowed Schnabel to disregard some of the larger, more Romantic compositions, and instead assigned to him the study of many abandoned pieces by Classical composers such as Mozart and Schubert.¹¹⁴ This decision by Leschetizky early on in Schnabel's career would prove to be predictive, as Schnabel became one of the foremost interpreters of Beethoven in the twentieth century. He also became the first artist in the history of modern technology to record the complete Beethoven sonatas. His academic reputation was almost unrivaled, due to his editions of Beethoven's repertoire and his devotion and

¹¹⁰ Allan Evans. "Friedman, Ignacy" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 9, ed. by Stanley Sadie. London, New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2001, pg. 271

¹¹¹ William Glock/Stephen Plaistow. "Schnabel, Artur" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 22, ed. by Stanley Sadie. London, New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2001, pg. 548

¹¹² David Dubal. *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*, pg. 229-230

¹¹³ William Glock/Stephen Plaistow. "Schnabel, Artur" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 22, ed. by Stanley Sadie. London, New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2001, pg. 548

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 548

commitment to his own vast number of students.¹¹⁵ Of all of Leschetizky's students, Schnabel was one of the most influential pedagogues in his own right, successfully continuing Leschetizky's musical influence well into the twentieth century. When asked, near the end of his life, to reflect back on his musical inheritance from Leschetizky, he remarked:

I am unable to say, to estimate, or to appreciate what I learned from Leschetizky. He succeeded in releasing the vitality and sense of beauty a student had in his nature, and would not tolerate any deviation from what he felt to be truthfulness of expression. All this devotion, seriousness, care, and honesty are compatible with a virtuoso.¹¹⁶

Perhaps it is impossible to understand every one of the minute, and often infinite, amount of details that go into such a transcendental legacy as Theodore Leschetizky's. What we do know is that his students' impact on twentieth century pianism was unrivalled and, arguably, without peer. The gravity of their effect on musical life in the twentieth century is a weight that will be felt and recognized for countless generations of pianists to come. They were a varied and disparate group of artists, whose approach to pianism was as distinctly different as the means by which they were taught. Originality and creativity, along with a beautiful tone production, are the only elements that they seem to share between them. This is perhaps the most accurate lesson that can be gleaned from a study of Leschetizky's students, a lesson which is wholly supported by the ideologies of Leschetizky's "method." Only when an artist is innovative, pioneering, and unafraid to resist convention, while still maintaining

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pg. 548-549

¹¹⁶ Dean Elder. "Schnabel's Lessons with Leschetizky." *Clavier* 33:6 (July-August 1994): 15

their own musical integrity, will a pedagogue's legacy truly attain a genuine sense of longevity.

CHAPTER 6

LESCHETIZKY'S COMPOSITIONAL LEGACY

Leschetizky's compositional legacy includes over seventy individual pieces written for the piano. The majority of this repertoire consists of small character pieces, specifically written in the vein of the salon music that was customary at the end of the nineteenth century. As has been discussed in previous chapters, Leschetizky the teacher was quite earnest and determined in his pedagogical approach to his students. Leschetizky the composer often sought to reveal another special, distinctive facet of his persona. His works are most often lyrical in nature, and possess a light-hearted, optimistic quality which can, at times, verge on sentimentalism. Here, one can truly catch a glimpse of the dichotomy that is Theodore Leschetizky, both the teacher and the composer. While Leschetizky most certainly understood and respected the compositions of the previous centuries, his own works are often simpler, both in compositional design and emotional content. This recalls a humorous incident that Annette Hullah recollected about an encounter that Leschetizky had with Brahms. Although Leschetizky and Brahms had a mutual admiration for the other's artistic merits, they were not fond of the other's compositional output. This, however, did not in any way dissuade them from becoming life-long friends. One day, as Leschetizky was composing, Brahms came in the room and commented, "Ha! What sort of things are you writing this morning? I see-quite *little* things, of course, yes." Leschetizky retorted

with, “*Little things?* Yes, they are, but ten times more amusing than yours, I can tell you.”¹¹⁷ This occurrence certainly reveals a very jocular, witty and easy-going side to Leschetizky’s character, one which was manifested in his compositions. From a pedagogical standpoint, it has been noted that:

Leschetizky seldom gives the great compositions to those whom he feels to be still immature. He sees the unfitness of expecting young, untried natures to deal with what is an expression of the deepest influences of life. They cannot understand. They can only imitate, and he shrinks from the task of trying to convey to them what they cannot possibly realise [*sic*] in its fullest and most intimate meaning. He gives what lies within, or at most just beyond their grasp...¹¹⁸

Knowing that the majority of Leschetizky’s students, even the younger ones, had a largely developed technical facility, one can argue that his pedagogical compositions are crafted from a more emotional standpoint, providing a teaching repertoire that is accessible to children, as well as adults. This consequently offers a selection of works which speak to precise technical and musical problems that Leschetizky wanted to deal with, but from a perspective which covers a much more comprehensible range of the emotional spectrum. In order to illustrate this, I have chosen five works that will function as representative depictions of Leschetizky’s compositional and pedagogical processes. They also serve as symbols of his unique, and currently neglected, pedagogical repertoire.

¹¹⁷ Hullah. *Theodor Leschetizky*, pg. 82-84

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 46-47

Leschetizky's *Meditation, Opus 19, No. 1*, subtitled *La Mélusine*, is a beautiful, charming piece that is modeled after the lyrical, poetic pieces of the nineteenth century, specifically Chopin's *Nocturnes* and Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words*. As mentioned previously, Leschetizky himself studied many of Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* while he was under Czerny's tutelage. Leschetizky continued this tradition in his own pedagogical workings, often assigning one of Mendelssohn's *Songs* as the student's first piece of repertoire. He did this in order that the student may learn the fundamentals of melodic shaping and how a melody should be properly accompanied.¹¹⁹ This lovely *Meditation* could easily act as a substitution for one of Mendelssohn's *Songs*, at least in terms of developing a certain skill set in a student. Mélusine was a character in European folklore, a mythological woman who was often portrayed as a mermaid or a water nymph, a harbinger of important news. This exquisite *Meditation*, written in the key of E Major, consists of a melody in the right hand, mostly in octaves, accompanied by a flowing figuration of arpeggios in the left hand. This piece poses two interpretive difficulties for the pianist, one being an issue of balance and the second of how much rubato one should apply. While the melody exists mostly in longer singing tones, the left handed-accompaniment is a wide-ranging, rapidly moving pattern that often covers the span of two octaves within a measure (mm. 3-4).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 43

Example 1. *Meditation, Opus 19, No. 1 (La Mélusine)*, mm. 1-7

The image shows a musical score for the first seven measures of 'Meditation, Opus 19, No. 1 (La Mélusine)' by Frédéric Chopin. The score is for piano and consists of two systems. The first system is marked 'Allegretto con moto.' and the second system is marked 'molto cantando'. The left hand plays a continuous, flowing accompaniment of eighth notes, while the right hand plays a melodic line. Dynamics include pp, p, and cresc. The tempo markings are 'Allegretto con moto.' and 'molto cantando'.

The pianist must pay careful attention to the touch used in the left hand; it must be light and smooth, rising and falling with the crest of the phrase, perhaps invoking the water implied by the subtitle's character. Yet, although it is most definitely an expressive element of its own, it must never impede the right hand's ability to sing out, because it is the rich melodic line that is the "voice above the waves". With a piece like this, consisting of such a splendid melody, the temptation for the pianist will be to become overly self-indulgent, in terms of the time that is taken at the end of each phrase. Leschetizky was known to dislike massive rubatos at the ends of the phrases, preferring tempos that moved and had a longer musical line. He drew a metaphor with a boat on a river saying, "Your phrase is endangered where the first cadence occurs. There you must keep up the moving steadily, or that little current will swerve you

around, and you may upset.”¹²⁰ This, of course, must be tempered with what we know about Leschetizky’s specific use of rubato in his own recorded output. The key for modern interpretations is to find a balance, a realization that the use of rubato as an expressive tool must be applied both with moderation and with a distinct purpose in mind. The pianist, in endeavoring not to wallow in the beauty of the composition, should pay careful attention to the actual phrase lengths, which are partially dictated by the harmonic progressions of the left hand. While they appear to be modest four-bar phrases, they are, in fact, phrases consisting of eight measures. While Leschetizky was primarily concerned with overall “effect”, *La Mélusine* should ideally give the audience one unified impression from the first note until the very last.

It is well documented that a naturally produced, singing tone was one of the most important elements of Leschetizky’s teaching¹²¹. His *Meditation, Opus 19, No. 6*, subtitled *Trost* or comfort, is a study in tonal production and contrasts. Due to the idiomatic nature of the instrument (tonal decay), tone production on the piano can be exceedingly intricate and Leschetizky was very well aware of this.¹²² On the surface, this lovely piece appears relatively simple interpretively, until one begins to utilize Leschetizky’s ideas of how to produce a singing tone.

¹²⁰ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, p.58

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27, 42, 61, 102

¹²² Prentner. *Leschetizky’s Fundamental Principles of Piano Technique*, p. 78

Example 2. *Meditation, Opus 19, No. 6 (Consolation-Trost)*, mm. 1-8

Piano.

Moderato, con espressione e ben legato la melodia.

The pianist must work to create a beautiful tone in the opening phrase (mm. 1-4) through the combined use of the finger, wrist, and arm. The tips of the fingers must be flat and the first joint should remain relatively firm. When the pianist's wrist is pliable, the relaxed weight of the arm will help to produce the necessary "roundness" of tone needed for a fluid musical line.¹²³ Leschetizky believed that a significant aspect of tone production was the way in which each tone related to the ones surrounding it.¹²⁴ Even though this work has a fairly homogenous rhythmic structure, the pianist must pay

¹²³ Brée. *Die Grundlage der Methode Leschetizky*, p.26

¹²⁴ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, p. 29

careful attention to the melody, making sure that the dotted sixteenth notes are in direct proportion to the longer tones that surround them. No two successive melodic tones should be played with the same volume, as Leschetizky believed that a completely uniform amount of tone within a melodic line destroys expression.¹²⁵ This work is a wonderful study in the apparent dichotomy within Leschetizky's teaching. He believed in interpretive simplicity, that important things should be said in the easiest of ways, and yet there is extraordinary detail and complexity in his process of tone production. Only by understanding the fundamentals and by giving meaning to each tone can one truly produce the effortless effect that Leschetizky wanted in this work.

Leschetizky's *Mazurka, Opus 24, No. 2* is a lively piece, full of vitality and animation, and is similar in many ways to the mazurkas of Leschetizky's fellow countryman, Frédéric Chopin. Both utilize a more chromatic harmony and draw on the use of repeated sections in order to structure the form of the composition. Ethel Newcomb documented that Leschetizky used to perform his *Mazurkas*, both this work and the one preceding it in the opus, on numerous occasions.¹²⁶ These often included the various *soirées* that he would hold in the evenings, in which he and his students would play, dance, and improvise. Subsequent to Leschetizky's desire for a beautiful tone production, the aspect that he most tried to impress upon his students was the necessity to possess a rhythmic sense that was both free and certain, all at the same time. Malwine Brée cites this particular *Mazurka* as an example of repertoire that can

¹²⁵ Brée. *Die Grundlage der Methode Leschetizky*, p. 52

¹²⁶ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, p. 34, 282

be studied in order to improve one's sense of rhythmic control. She points out that in this particular *Mazurka*, Leschetizky often emphasizes the second and third beats interchangeably, as is typical in the traditional style of the mazurka.¹²⁷ She also notes that, "Rhythm does not imply an absolutely fixed time for each beat; but within each bar it permits a fairly free disposal of beats. Thus individual beats may be lengthened or shortened, the difference being adjusted in other beats; but whole measures may not be changed in proportion to one another."¹²⁸ In order to have an uninhibited and yet firm sense of rhythmic propulsion, the pianist must certainly keep this maxim in mind. The performer has a great deal of liberty when it comes to the placement of rubato within the individual measures, as long as the rhythmic relationship between each measure remains intact. The opening of the *Mazurka* (mm. 1-10) is improvisatory in nature, although it does introduce the rhythmic motif that will dominate the entire piece.

¹²⁷ Brée. *Die Grundlage der Methode Leschetizky*, p. 54-55

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 54

Example 3. *Mazurka, Opus 24, No. 2*, mm. 1-10

PIANO. *Allegro vivace.*

p *cresc.* *sf* *cresc. e accele.*

res. do *f* *ff*

sf *dim.*

It is punctuated by a series of boisterous chords, in which the pianist must be careful to keep the fingertips firm and let the wrist swing upward when the chords are depressed. Leschetizky was adamant that chords “are to be pressed rather than struck,”¹²⁹ specifically for the sake of tone production. The major portion of this *Mazurka* consists of alternating sections, one with a definite vigorous, sparkling character, and the other with a more lyrical, poetic quality. As Leschetizky most

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 29

certainly wanted the sections' opposite natures to be emphasized, the pianist must be careful to alter touch, tone, rhythmic accents, and pedaling in order that the contrasting attributes may be noticed.

Example 4. *Mazurka, Opus 24, No. 2*, mm. 11-14



Example 5. *Mazurka, Opus 24, No. 2*, mm. 37-40



The *Mazurka* culminates in a virtuosic ending of scalar figurations and arpeggios, bringing this exciting rhythmic study to a close with an ending very typical of the Romantic era.

Canzonetta Toscana, all'antica, Opus 39, No. 3, subtitled *Firenze* or *Florence*, is a stunning work, filled with melancholy, grief and sadness. Leschetizky was known to assign this piece to many of his students; Horszowski himself had fond memories of the

piece in his recollections of having studied it with Leschetizky.¹³⁰ About this particular work, Ethel Newcomb notes, “He had written one or two pieces upon a definite emotional idea...The melody of the *Canzonetta Toscana* resembled a song he had heard from an old woman sitting on the steps of a church in Florence, mourning the loss of her daughter.”¹³¹ The piece is written in 6/8 and begins with the left hand alternating between a tonic/dominant drone-like pattern; this represents the solemn mood that must be created in order to replicate an atmosphere of true sorrow. The first four measures serve as introductory material, allowing the pianist but a brief moment to establish the necessary ambience. When the melodic material begins in mm. 4, the right hand figuration has a lilting quality, enabling the musical line to move forward while still allowing the pianist enough time to inflect the melody with the proper expression.

¹³⁰ Robert Dumm. “Horszowski Remembers Vienna and Great Pianists of the Past”. *Clavier* 41:9 (November 2002): 28

¹³¹ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, p. 162

Example 6. *Canzonetta Toscana, all'antica, Opus 39, No. 3*, mm. 1-6

Allegretto con moto. $\text{♩} = 90$. Thal Schetzky, Op. 39 No. 3

PIANO. *pp molto legato una corda*

mf il canto ben marcato tre corde

Of interesting note is the fact, throughout the entire piece, the melodic line is divided between the hands and lies between the drone-like material in the left hand and the lilting patterns in the right hand. This creates an effect similar to the “three-hand” effect often used by Sigismond Thalberg, another purveyor of salon music during this period. For our purposes, this is significant because Leschetizky was known to dislike hand redistribution¹³², unless it could be executed without detracting from the music’s integrity. One can then surmise that this melody was crafted in a purposeful and pedagogical way, one which would compel his students to acquire the skill of being able to seamlessly pass a melody back and forth between the hands. The first step for the pianist, practically speaking, should be to practice only the melody, as divided between

¹³² *Ibid.*, pg. 44

the hands. This will allow for a proper shaping and blending of the tones, before the accompaniment patterns are added later. Interpretatively speaking, Leschetizky was known to promote the use of the soft pedal, not for issues of volume, but “for the veiled quality of tone that it produces.”¹³³ There are numerous places in this work, specifically the beginning, in which the pianist should explore and experiment with soft pedal application, including a variety of different depths; this will allow for a more hushed and covered tone production and will aid in creating the proper atmosphere. Lastly, it is known that Leschetizky was incredibly influenced by the human voice; he was always pleased to accompany visiting singers and he was constantly heard encouraging his students to listen to the best singers in Vienna whenever the opportunity presented itself.¹³⁴ He believed that the naturalness of the human voice, with its instinctive and effortless ability to phrase, was the ultimate example for pianists. It is what they should strive to create on their own instruments. In contemplating *Canzonetta's* melodic line from a more vocal perspective, especially considering its inspiration, the performer will have a much greater idea of how to combine tonal coloring with a natural, unforced, and yet communicative phrasing.

Jeu des ondes (Wellen und Wogen), Opus 40, No. 1 is a superb example of how Leschetizky crafted his compositions with specific technical and musical ideas in mind. At first glance, this delightful little piece seems to be similar to various other etudes that originated in the nineteenth century. It is cast in the key of e minor and

¹³³ Brée. *Die Grundlage der Methode Leschetizky*, pg. 50

¹³⁴ Newcomb. *Leschetizky As I Knew Him*, p.34

consists of rapid, virtuosic passages in the right hand that, in many ways, resemble the compositions of Chopin. Upon closer examination though, one finds that there are several distinct technical principles at play in the opening thematic material (mm. 1-4).

Example 7. *Jeu des ondes (Wellen und Wogen)*, Opus 40, No. 1, mm. 1-4

The image shows a musical score for the opening of 'Jeu des ondes' by Liszt. It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows measures 1 and 2, and the second system shows measures 3 and 4. The right hand has a complex, rapid passage with many sixteenth notes, while the left hand has a simpler accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings like 'mp' and 'm.f.', and performance instructions like 'cresc.' and 'dim.'. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5 above the notes. The piece is in G major and 2/4 time.

Marie Prentner states that the greatest difficulty in trying to execute smooth, rapid passagework lies in “passing the thumb under the hand.”¹³⁵ The opening of *Jeu des ondes* involves the thumb passing under the fourth finger by the interval of a fourth. In order to obtain an even tone throughout this figuration, the pianist must prepare each finger early (another trademark of the Leschetizky “method”¹³⁶), and tuck the thumb underneath the hand by bending the first joint. This enables the hand position to

¹³⁵ Prentner. *Leschetizky’s Fundamental Principles of Piano Technique*, p. 49

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12

stay intact and greatly increases the ease with which the pianist can move their hand into the next “position.” To ensure freedom of motion, the forearm and wrist must follow the individual finger preparation; this will allow the thumb free range of motion, enable it to stay close to the keys, and will result in a flawless transfer of tone between the various pitches in this passage. Of remarkable note is the fact that the technical elements in this opening passage (early preparation of the finger, tucking of the thumb, wrist and forearm alignment) strongly resemble an early four-finger exercise that was taught by Leschetizky. However, in the latter’s case, the exercise was in the key of C Major and utilized four consecutive pitches.¹³⁷ While horizontal wrist adjustment is of the utmost necessity in order to keep the mechanism loose, Leschetizky did believe that there were times when the wrist could gradually stiffen in order to execute a desired musical effect.¹³⁸ In this particular instance (mm. 1), the wrist can gradually stiffen as it nears the top of the crescendo in order to allow the crest of the crescendo to occur on the B, the highest point in the musical line. As the figuration then begins to descend, the wrist must relax; this eventually returns the hand (and the musical material) to the point of origin, so that it may begin this circular motion again in the following measure.¹³⁹ This particular technical passage demonstrates his belief that one of the functions of the wrist is to allow the hand the simplest way to get to the next note while achieving the musical intention of the phrase. Leschetizky takes this opening idea and

¹³⁷ Brée. *Die Grundlage der Methode Leschetizky*, pg. 14

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 50

evolves it by transposing it into an assortment of different keys. For these intents and purposes, this is significant because it changes the topography of the technique, forcing the pianist to slightly alter the motion of the thumb as it moves between varieties of black key/white key combinations. A final point of interest occurs later in the piece (mm. 41) when Leschetizky introduces a secondary theme, lying in the middle of the keyboard, which often alternates between the hands.

Example 8. *Jeu des ondes (Wellen und Wogen)*, Opus 40, No. 1, mm. 41-46

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system is marked "Tempo I." and consists of two staves. The right-hand staff features a complex, flowing melodic line with slurs and fingerings. The left-hand staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. Dynamics include *p marcata* and *cresc.*. The second system continues the piece, with the right-hand staff showing more intricate passages, including a triplet and various fingerings (e.g., 3, 1 4, 3 2 1 2). The left-hand staff continues with accompaniment, including dynamics like *dim.*, *m.d.*, and *mf*. Both systems include performance markings such as *Tr.* and asterisks.

As the figuration in the right hand is comparable to the opening of the piece, this poses a unique balance problem for the pianist. In this instance, the pianist must be careful to produce a melodic, beautiful tone (lying almost exclusively under the thumb) while maintaining control of the technical elements in the right hand's passagework.

When practiced slowly and conscientiously, the technical elements that Leschetizky so definitively wrote into this piece will become assimilated. At that point, his motto of “music begins where technique leaves off”¹⁴⁰ will ring true, and the pianist will most certainly hear the “play of the waves” which the title suggests.

¹⁴⁰ Evans. *Ignaz Friedman: Romantic Master Pianist*, p. 41

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

It is my desire that this dissertation and lecture recital will one day occupy a special niche within the realm of existing research on Theodore Leschetizky. Current and future pedagogues will have a tool that, within one cohesive source, will outline for them the legacy left to us by one of the most influential teachers of the instrument. By including analysis of some of Leschetizky's pedagogical compositions, I also anticipate that, at minimum, they may gain exposure to a wonderful part of the piano repertoire that has been relatively unused, one that also has a viable, educational application. As both aspects of his legacy enlighten and inform the other, it is by understanding both that we get a true glimpse of Leschetizky's contributions to pianistic history.

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