



Work on the Ensemble in the Elementary Grades

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Abstract: This article highlights the step-by-step work on a piano ensemble in the elementary grades of a music school.

Key words: piano ensemble, classical music, children psychology, education.

In our time, music is widely penetrating the lives and consciousness of children. Radio, cinema, television, and sound recording constantly affect the auditory development of children. From a very early age, children get used to music quite naturally, easily perceive it, and try to understand it with the same curiosity as other phenomena in the world around them.

"If you carefully analyze," wrote the authoritative famous teacher Sukhomlinsky, "what in everyday terms is called happiness and misfortune, success and failure... all this is based on the culture of human relations, on the ability to manage one's desires, conforming and coordinating them with the desires of other people. None of them has the right to forget that there are other people next to them and that every act of one person inevitably affects others. Sukhomlinsky considers the upbringing of a culture of human relations, a culture of desires, an extremely important task for a teacher. Therefore, at the beginning of music lessons, the child must be interested, using his natural curiosity. The best way to do this is to play in an ensemble. The members of the ensemble are united by the desire for a common goal. The creative experience is transformed when playing in an ensemble with empathy, which implies complete emotional "solidarity" among partners. Music is a form of non-verbal communication. The ensemble player must have a special ability to "feel—the art of not only understanding and sharing the feelings of another who is playing next to him but also foreseeing possible improvisational nuances. Playing the piano in four hands is a kind of joint music-making that was practiced at times, at every opportunity, and at any level of instrument proficiency. We are still doing it today. Almost all outstanding masters wrote compositions in this genre. They wrote both for home music-making and for intensive study and concert performances. The pedagogical value of this type of joint performance is not well known, and therefore it is used too rarely in teaching. Meanwhile, four-handed playing sets the same requirements for performers as ensemble playing in other instrumental genres.

Starting in the class of a piano ensemble to study playing with a partner, the young pianist meets with the main aesthetic problems not speculatively or in a community plan but purely professionally in the area that is most exciting for him. Education and training go hand in hand. By mastering ensemble skills, the student develops precious moral qualities. And improving the character creates the necessary prerequisites for the performing arts. Friendly communication with a partner, exchange of opinions, and collective work mobilize the creative will, readiness for perception and action, enrich the imagination of pianists, and suggest solutions that could not be found by oneself. When playing together, the choice of a partner is of considerable importance. During the lesson, the teacher usually plays with the student. As a rule, in pieces for beginners, the first (upper) part is monophonic,

and the second (bass, intended for the teacher, contains a harmonic addition or accompaniment. The upper part is of leading importance and therefore requires full soundness and confidence from the student. Many young or poorly gifted students get used to simultaneous sounding only after frequent playing together and, when performing a piece, completely give way to the leading role of the bass line. The musical child, on the other hand, really likes the role of the "prima donna", and often he plays music much more expressively than with two-handed playing. Unfortunately, there is very little literature for elementary education in which the lower part would be so easy that it could be performed by a student. Therefore, you need to use every such opportunity in order to change roles. Playing the second part, the child learns accompaniment and exercises in a muffled sound and soft bass performance. The most important thing in such a teacher-student union is an intuitive musical influence, carried out in the most natural way. Since the first party usually has a leading role, the student may feel musically equal to the teacher. He learns to listen and to join the ensemble, and under this impression, he performs his solo-thematic part with greater responsibility. However, not only the joint game of the teacher and the student should be recommended. The most beautiful thing is if one of the family members regularly plays music with the child. This can be seen from the joy that such music-making brings to children and from the willingness with which they do it. They play their part confidently, rhythmically clearly, and even get used to overcoming small "misses". This psychological factor plays an important role in the joint game between two students. In this case, children of the same age and the same level of training are chosen as partners if possible. And since each of them does not want to compromise himself in front of the other, something like an unspoken competition arises, which is an incentive for a more thorough and attentive game. Knowledge of the part, even excellent knowledge, does not make a pianist a partner. He becomes such only in the process of complex and very peculiar work with another student. When playing together, you need to choose a slow pace to avoid frequent stutters and interruptions. Both players together analyze each consonance, each structural particle, and find a place for them in the form of a whole; all the most important should stand out quite prominently; the secondary is characterized by a quieter sound level. For this purpose, the following exercise is recommended: each partner plays with only one hand. You can rehearse separately both leading voices (for example, soprano and tenor in parallel two-voice), extreme voices (bass and soprano), themes in different voices, or one melody without bass and other accompanying voices, etc. Each of the performers must carefully and critically listen to all the diverse dynamics of the ensemble. Also great is the importance of rhythmic precision when playing four hands. At first, a metronome can help here; later, it is necessary to achieve such synchronization of movements and performing techniques that ensures the simultaneity and consistency of the game. While the piece is not thoroughly learned, long pauses (several measures) should be quietly calculated so as not to make a mistake in the next introduction. The tasks of joint training also include the exact distribution of carriage, which is established by both partners. It is served mainly by the performer of the lower part, where it should, in this case, be indicated. The pedal effect must be very clearly designed because, due to the inept use of the pedal, the texture of the bass part, often quite dense, can become even more heavy. This kind of careful and intense learning makes playing four hands into something more than just playing music. There are many original four-handed works in musical literature that certainly deserve such intensive study. It is quite natural that when playing at four, they play a lot and willingly from a sheet. Since too frequent stops spoil the joy of sight-playing, we choose musical material for this that is much easier (in terms of level 1-2 academic years lower) than what is being learned in the lessons at the present time. The student should try to cover his part as broadly as possible and reproduce the most important on the keyboard. First of all, you need to focus on the metric side, covering the count of subsequent measures in advance. Counting often helps with further reading. It can perhaps be argued that in this case, the sense of rhythm is subjected to a particularly good test. It is desirable that one of the players not stop the game when the other stops. This will teach the second performer to navigate faster and get back into the game. It should be noted that many teachers speak out against playing four hands. Despite all efforts to preserve the transparency of the piano texture, it is not always possible to achieve the desired sound effect because, due to the large range, the sound is often too dense and overloaded. Such heaviness makes an unpleasant impression and causes a negative attitude among teachers toward playing four hands.

The four-handed playing in elementary education is also often rejected due to technical reasons. It is believed that the somewhat cramped position of the performers can adversely affect their fitness. However, these disadvantages are so insignificant compared to the advantages that four-handed play is not worth avoiding at all. Moreover, the latter is only a small part of the entire educational work. It would be very desirable to see more often in the classrooms of our school that two instruments could play music with children on two pianos, as Bela Bartok imagined in *Microcosmos*. One cannot wish for more.

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