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**FOSTERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE SKILLS  
THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EXPRESSIVE  
'GESTURAL VOCABULARY':  
A CASE STUDY APPROACH WITH SIX PRE-TERTIARY PIANISTS  
IN THE ONE-TO-ONE STUDIO**

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*Existing literature and anecdotal evidence suggest that principles of expressive performance are too often not being given sufficient attention until rather late in a student's development. This presentation will provide commentary on several initial, but significant key findings of my doctoral project at Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, one that seeks to illuminate the pedagogical concepts and environmental factors of the one-to-one studio that might best foster the development of expressive performance skills within pre-tertiary pianists. Importantly, the research proposes that the early implementation of an expressive 'gestural vocabulary' can facilitate expressive playing, rather than simply being a by-product of expressive playing. Six of my own students have acted as case studies, with their progress, and the manner in which they have engaged with the research aims, being charted through video recording of lessons, my own reflective journal and interviews with the students and their parents. Beyond the specific project, the paper reflects briefly on the wider implications regarding the teaching of expression in the one-to-one context.*

### **Background**

As involvement in musical activity and learning to play an instrument are often seen as vehicles that catalyse creativity and self-expression, it comes as no surprise that this view is reflected by scholars such as Davidson, Pitts & Correia (2001, p. 51), who have suggested that, 'expressive musical performance is the long-term goal of all instrumental work'. Zhukov (2004, p. 27), maintains that 'expressive playing is the ultimate goal of music teaching'. Be that as it may, it is paradoxical that while much has been written in terms of technique, the area of musical expression has been relatively overlooked in the literature on piano pedagogy, and does warrant further consideration, particularly with regards to the relatively early stages of a student's development. This comes despite increased investigation in recent years (e.g. Davidson, Pitts & Correia, 2001; Benson & Fung, 2005; Lisboa, 2008; McPhee, 2011).

This situation is quite peculiar, as a fundamental theme in the study and performance of music is whether or not it is heard as being expressive (Budd, 1985; Davies, 2001; Juslin, 2001). Gabrielsson (1988) and Woody (2003) state that

in studies of music performance, 'expression has been used to refer to variations in timing, dynamics, timbre and pitch and the ability to perform expressively by varying these

elements distinguishes advanced musicians from lesser-skilled performers (McPhee, 2011, p. 333).

Karlsson & Juslin (2008) have suggested that expression gives way to interpretative insight and our preference for one musician over another is often due to our perception of their expressive skills. Many authors concur that for most listeners, the emotional content of music is its paramount attribute (Blood & Zatorre, 2001; Dalla Bella, Peretz, Rousseu, & Gosselin, 2001; Sloboda & O'Neill, 2001; cited in Hailstone, Omar, Henley, Frost, Kenward and Warren, 2009, p. 2142). Several scholars have argued that the expression of human emotion is one of the most important aspects of musical performance (Davies, 1994; Gabrielsson & Juslin, 1996; Gabrielsson, 1999; Karlsson, 2008; Woody, 2000, 2003) and for many listeners, expression is the essence of music (Lindstrom, Juslin, Breslin & Williamon, 2003). The ability to play expressively is often seen as fundamental to communicating musical meaning (Juslin & Laukka, 2004; Laukka, 2004; Lindstrom, Juslin, Breslin & Williamon, 2003) and Woody (2002) seems agreeable when he says, '...listeners generally find "meaning" in music by responding emotionally to the expressive qualities they hear' (p. 214). Further, many performing musicians value expression as an important aspect of their craft (Boyd & George-Warren, 1992; King, 1996; Menuhin, 1996; Schumacher, 1995).

Of specific interest to this study, is Lehmann, Sloboda & Woody's (2007) suggestion that the crux of expressive performance is found in tonal nuance, a subset of expression. Tonal nuance appears to be similar to prosody, the rhythm and inflection of spoken language and has been described as the intricate manipulation of auditory parameters that gives music its ability to invoke humanistic arousal in the listener (Lehmann, Sloboda & Woody, 2007). According to Lehmann, Sloboda & Woody (2007), the artistic worth of a performance is largely determined by a musician's ability to manipulate tonal nuance in an aesthetically significant way (p. 86). Indeed, it seems that they are not alone in this view, as Holmes (2011, p. 301) cites numerous scholars that view the ability to vary timbre as 'one of the principal ways through which performers communicate musical structure, ideas, emotions and musical personality' (Gabriellson & Juslin, 1996; Juslin, 2003; Juslin, Friberg, Schoonderwaldt & Karlsson, 2004). Seashore (1936, p. 24) saw timbre as 'the most basic attribute of all music' and it seems recent research by Levitin (2008, p. 45) backs such a claim by describing timbre as 'the most important and ecologically relevant feature of auditory experiences.'

As expression is of such significance, it is somewhat surprising that existing literature (e.g. Woody, 2000; Rostvall & West, 2001; Juslin & Perrson, 2002; Lindstrom, Juslin, Breslin & Williamon, 2003; Young, Burwell & Pickup, 2003) and my professional experience would suggest that the development of expressive skills in young pianists is

too often not being given sufficient attention until rather late in a student's development. Because of its mystical perception, it could be that musical nuance is difficult to convey in everyday language and equally challenging to notate (Raffman, 1993), but there does seem to be a wide assumption that 'getting the notes right' is the central goal in the early years, a scenario that Schleuter (1997, p. 48) refers to as 'button-pushing' where the notated score is indicative of only which fingers to press, rather than in terms of what sound and expressive quality might be musically desirable. Musical expression has been commonly viewed as a defacto measure of talent or something that will develop naturally if the student is 'gifted' or 'musical', but it is heartening that this view is beginning to be challenged. Indeed, many scholars have suggested that to view the ability to 'communicate beyond the notes on the page' (Fink, 2002, p. 97) as reflective of an innate, genetic skill that cannot be taught actually works to hinder a student's development (Fink, 2002; Karlsson & Juslin, 2008; Sloboda 1998; McPhee, 2011). Similarly, Davidson (2002) suggests that the importance of such innate skill is often exaggerated, and to view the expressive skills separating average and excellent performers as a chasm filled by an untrained 'enigmatic gift' is somewhat erroneous (p. 98). However, research by Sloboda and Davidson (1996) has revealed that the expressive devices that are often used automatically by performers who are not necessarily conscious of what they are doing, can potentially be taught, given that they are used systematically, improve the communicability of musical structure, remain stable over time and can be flexibly applied.

### **What does the literature say about teaching expression?**

It has been argued that the entire musical communication process constitutes numerous sequential parts from the composer's inspiration, to written score, to performers' sounded interpretation, to listener's perception and their emotional response (Gabrielsson & Juslin, 1996; Kendall & Carterette, 1990). From an audience point of view, *affect* is only possible if expressive ideas 'are translated into discernable acoustic sound properties' (Woody, 2002) and it appears that recent research has focused on the performer's cognition and the audience's perception of such expression within this process, with theories regarding the pedagogy of teaching musical expression to students being based on this knowledge. The literature demonstrates that the desire to analyse musical expression in order to inform teaching practice is gathering momentum, at least with more advanced musicians. From cognitive feedback (Juslin and Laukka, 2000; Juslin, Friberg, Schoonderwaldt & Karlsson, 2004), aural modeling (Dickey, 1992; Ebie, 2004; Karlsson & Juslin, 2008; Woody, 2003), focusing on felt emotions (Gabrielsson & Juslin, 1996; Juslin, 2003; Sloboda, 1996; Woody, 2000), the use of imagery and metaphor (Arrais & Rodrigues, 2007, 2009; Baren, 1998; Barten, 1998;

Froehlich & Cattley, 1991; Persson, 1996; Martin, 1995; Schippers, 2006; Watson, 2008; Woody, 2002), verbal direction (Woody, 1999), microstructural acoustical devices (Parncutt, 2003), Gestalt-based rules (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983; Thompson, Sundberg, Friberg & Fryden, 1989), computer assisted evaluation (Juslin, Karlsson, Lindstrom, Friberg & Schoonderwaldt, 2006; Karlsson, Liljeström & Juslin, 2009) and enhancing the effects of timbre (Goydke, Altenmüller, Moller & Munte, 2004; Hailstone, Omar, Henley, Frost, Kenward & Warren, 2009; Holmes, 2011), many avenues have and continue to be explored. Be that as it may, Rink (2004) has argued that within empirical studies that attempt to quantify musical expression, there has been a bias towards investigating tempo and dynamics, as they are easier to scrutinise and gauge than tone, timbre and bodily gesture.

While a move away from more cerebral techniques to those that involve principles of embodied cognition is welcome, within existing studies exploring the role of body movement and gesture in expressive performance (eg. Pierce, 1994; Davidson & Dawson, 1995; Davidson & Correia, 2002; Muñoz, 2007; Pierce, 2010; Dogantan-Dack, 2011), investigations that aim to equip young pianists with a knowledge of the functional aspects of gesture are virtually non-existent, despite the terms *choreography* and *gestural vocabulary* being referred to by piano pedagogues such as Fink (2002) and Berman (2000). While the use of gesture and movement of the body to assist with expressive tone production seems to be widely recognised within piano pedagogical circles, it is curious that an exploratory investigation into the viability of teaching an expressive gestural vocabulary with young players is yet to be undertaken. Waiting until a student is emotionally mature enough to *be* expressive when playing before introducing concepts that link gesture, tone production and musical expression, is surely putting the proverbial cart before the horse. It may be that a pedagogical approach that utilises such a gestural vocabulary with novices warrants further investigation and consideration more generally than has thus far been the case, especially if we are to consider Muñoz's (2007) view:

gestures are part of a range of human reactions to feeling, sensation and comprehension, and to underestimate them in live performance would mean to ignore human signals in a human invention, which is what music is (p. 59).

It seems that gestural communication is critical even in the musical experiences of early childhood, with aspects of rhythm, tempo and dynamics embedded in playful movements and actions such as clapping (Davidson, 2002; Papousek, 1996). It could be that the link between emotion, physical gesture and musical meaning is forged early, with gestural play and quasi-musical vocalisations known as *motherese* being viewed as ways to communicate basic emotional needs (Davidson, 2002). Viewed in this context, piano

pedagogy that employs a gestural focus of the arms in order to convey musical meaning seems viable and certainly worthy of close investigation. Indeed, Fink (2002, p. 61) seems to support such a concept, when he calls the implementation of consistent arm choreography '...our most powerful expressive tool'.

Your fingers are, quite obviously, of paramount importance in playing the piano. Only seemingly independent, they are actually influenced by all the other movements of your body. Were I to single out the most important of these movements, I would unhesitatingly draw your attention to the forward-backward movements of your upper arms. When properly coordinated, these movements must be considered the primary source of your musical and technical control. They influence the shaping of your phrases as much as they do the ease of your execution. In short, your understanding of upper arm movements will unquestionably lend a sense of naturalness and predictability to your playing (Bernstein, 1981, p. 173).

Bowman (2004, p. 38; cited in Muñoz, 2007, p. 56) states that the '...perception of musical gesture is invariably a fundamental part of what the music, fully perceived, is.' Muñoz (2007) has argued that even when appearing spontaneous, expressive movements are employed by performers in the creation of relationships between musical gestures and the character, articulation, quality and intensity of the sounds they create. Dogantan-Dack (2011) maintains that the gestural aspect in producing a sound is crucial to its timbral identity, and the uniqueness of a performer can in part be found in their tonal palette, causally attributed to the movements and gestures of their performing body. Most recently, MacRitchie and Zicari (2012) have provided empirical evidence to suggest that the cognitive decisions made by pianists are translated into physical gestures that are aimed at realising their specific sound intentions. 'For pianists, touch is a corporeal tool that can be used not only to physically produce notes on the piano, but to mediate their expressive intentions for the performed music' (MacRitchie & Zicari, 2012, p. 636). Results from their study indicate that when a pianist's expressive intention is connected with their physical gestures, the control of tension within the limbs is crucial to the creation of tonal variety.

This relationship between beauty of tone and optimal body use has been described as the *sonic self*, a term coined by Cumming (2000, p. 23). Likewise, Smalley (1992) sees the timbre of a sound and the human body that created it as indissolubly linked. Further, it has been argued by Dogantan-Dack (2011) that that the pianist develops a memory for tone colour that is grounded in their kinaesthetic sensations and

the timbre represents the unique interaction between their body and the instrument, the experiential result of the constant attunement between the force they supply to initiate and sustain the sounds and the counter-force exerted by the sounding instrument (p.

250).

Further, in discussing the relationship between gesture, touch and sound, Berman (2000) sees their interaction as a process of

building one's vocabulary of physical motions, a personal pianistic 'toolbox'. The larger the vocabulary, the more eloquent our musical speech becomes; the better equipped the toolbox, the more effective and efficient the pianist's work will be. And the better the pianist controls sound, the more effectively he is able to communicate musical expression to an audience (p. 23).

This view certainly comes close to the aims of the present study, where a gestural vocabulary that can facilitate expressive sound through touch is established and stored as kinesthetic memory.

Muñoz (2007) sees the performer's physical gesture as a meaningful and complementary visual element that influences the way music performance is aurally perceived:

Given that movement is the motor of sound and intention is the impulse of gesture, the inevitable connection between intentional body movements and music emerges, allowing us to establish synaesthesia channels which influence expressiveness, understanding, and communication in performance events (p. 55).

When discussing gestural timing in relation to sound, Muñoz (2007) defines three states of execution.

In the time before, the gesture represents the anticipation of musical need or expression, in the parallel time this gesture accompanies and is seen contemporarily to the sonorous discourse. When sound is free of any real practical execution, expressive gesture may explain or resolve the expression of sound in the time after (p. 58).

This seems similar to Lister-Sink's (2013) conception of 'the basic stroke', which includes a preparatory movement, the moment of sound production, and a follow-through movement, which serves as the start of the next preparatory movement. The question is, how do we foster the realisation of such ideas in young pianists, and at what stage should these principles be introduced? If we are to take heed of Muñoz's (2007, p. 58) notion that '...to perceive, feel or understand music, it is crucial to perceive, feel, and understand our body...' it seems to be a case of the sooner the better.

With the above in mind, this study proposes that musical expression be understood to be a process where body movement, particularly gestural activity of the arms, hands and trunk, is crucial in developing a young pianist's ability to convey tonal nuance, phrase shape, articulatory sparkle, rhythmic vitality, musical characterisation and '...a connection to the music that is honest, real and radiating self-confidence ...' (Westney,

2003, p.34). This approach is informed by my own pedagogical background and consultation with the literature that supports the indissoluble link between gesture, instrument, timbre and tonal nuance.

### **Aims of the Study**

In recent years, one-to-one instrumental and vocal instruction has become an area of increasing research interest, but much of this literature has centred around highly experienced tertiary teachers who are mostly self-taught in pedagogy (McPhee, 2011). Research has found that a common shortcoming of the teachers in these studies was a lack of encouragement towards autonomy in interpretation and musical expression (Gaunt, 2004, 2008; Persson, 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 2000), with Persson arguing that a majority, 'dominate their students completely' (1994, p. 88, cited in Carey, Grant, McWilliam & Taylor, 2013, p. 149). Such studies have suggested that students should be taught strategies to enable them to create expressive interpretations that are personally meaningful (McPhee, 2011). One is left to question at what stage of the learning process should these strategies be introduced? Apart from McPhee's (2011) study of adolescent musicians, within the small body of research that explores issues of one-to-one teaching to school-aged students (eg. Colprit, 2000; Duke, Flowers & Wolfe, 1997; Fredrickson, 2007; Gillespie, 1991; Siebenaler, 1997; Ward, 2004), almost no consideration has been given to the teaching of musical expression in the relatively early stages of pianistic development. A recent study by Lisboa (2008) indicated that during (cello) instruction, teachers should be helping children to develop the tools needed for independent expressive playing. When commenting more generally on the role of musical expression in music education, Elliott (2005, p. 103) seems to value its importance when he states, '...we need to reflect upon and teach this dimension of musical meaning more carefully, deliberately, and creatively than we have in the past'.

The purpose of my qualitative study is to explore the dissemination of strategies that foster musical expression within the one-to-one studio, and to question what kind of learning environment might encourage expressive sensibility in young students at earlier stages of their development. By reflecting critically on my professional practice through the examination and analysis of six case studies at a pre-tertiary music school attached to a major Australian university, this research will explore *real world* strategies and processes that I use to foster expressive playing in my piano students of late elementary /early intermediate level. To achieve this, the research will propose the development of an explicit *gestural vocabulary*, one that I suggest can assist young students to intrinsically link how they move at the piano, with the types of sound that they are able and intend to produce. While elements of gesture and physical movement have been a

long-standing part of piano pedagogy for generations, the personal opinions as to the relevance of such processes will be garnered from the students and their parents through semi-structured research interviews. As suggested in the literature, supporting young pianists in their expressive maturation may be linked to their own sense of personhood, musical identity, and competence and could contribute to their willingness to engage with piano study long-term. Indeed, this aim seems to echo that of Hallam (2010), who calls for greater emphasis on affect in music education, citing individual and societal benefits.

### **What am I doing and how am I doing it?**

Six of my students at QCGU have been chosen to act as case studies, and they represent a range of levels of skill attainment, degrees of commitment, age, gender and cultural background, and subjectively perceived levels of kinesthetic awareness, tonal awareness, coordination, motor skill, rhythmic reliability, self-confidence, level of engagement, mindset, and overall temperament. Such subjective judgements were drawn after consultation with the literature, from data provided by the students and their parents during semi-structured interviews, by reflecting on my personal and professional experience teaching school-aged pianists, and in particular, by reflecting on my prior professional experience and personal interactions with the student participants themselves.

Kinesthetic awareness, coordination and rhythmic reliability have been chosen as areas for investigation due to their perceived ability to influence the ease at which a gestural vocabulary may be assimilated. As reflected in the literature, tonal awareness can be seen as an important discussion point in the context of this study, as the type of gesture a student uses is directly linked with the quality of touch and therefore the tone produced, and a student's awareness of tonal detail may help to facilitate their ability to understand a causal relationship between gesture, touch and tone. While a link between the dissemination of expressive pedagogy and factors such as engagement, commitment, mindsets, and overall temperament may not be immediately obvious, they are areas that the literature suggests are important in fostering effective learning and therefore will be considered within the context of the study. In summary, rather than choosing research participants based on their 'learning style', an area in the research literature fraught with controversy and conflicting points of view, these factors have been chosen as they reflect a range of physical, musical and personal attributes, give a holistic view of the research participants, and are flexible and subject to change over time.

The main research question explores ways in which the implementation of a *gestural vocabulary* may be useful in to fostering musical confidence and expressive playing skills within these students. Secondary research questions seek to describe its relevance, degree of uptake and the manner in which such a vocabulary is assimilated. Weekly lessons during 2014 have been videoed to allow repeated and retrospective viewing. Interviews with students and their parents were conducted in March and December 2014, and my own reflective journal holds a detailed account of the lessons, with reflective writings pursuing the central aims of the study.

### **What is an expressive 'gestural vocabulary'?**

While an expressive gestural vocabulary could be viewed in simple terms as a holistic awareness of the body acting as a kinetic chain when playing, and how an intrinsic connection is made between gestural movement, touch, timbre and tone production, there are many individual components that are built and blended together over time, much the same as a person's spoken or written vocabulary. Consider learning a second language: one would most likely start with basic words, move to simple phrases and then develop more complicated sentences over time. At its highest level, a person's written vocabulary could be quite complex, and their speech patterns increasingly expressive and persuasive, yet the process of its assimilation is often scaffolded, with increasingly difficult tasks being layered as skills are mastered, fluency increases, and confidence grows.

This process can be likened to the implementation of an expressive gestural vocabulary, where one or two basic movements are learnt, added together, combined with others, and developed into increasingly complex choreographic patterns, often where the two hands act independently. This can all be assimilated one step at a time, ultimately leading to a young player having an increasing ability to 'choose' which gestural combination will give them the tonal effect that they seek to implement. It is important to note that I am not proposing that gestures are simply added *ad hoc* to serve as mere visual display. While they are not immediately obvious, part of the teacher's role may be guiding the student to find and implement the physical gestures that lie beyond the musical gestures within the score, as they are an intrinsic part of the notation, are fundamental to its effective execution, and help to shape the sound and 'colour' the touch. At a foundational level, there are some fundamental gestural concepts that can be studied independently or concurrently with implementation into repertoire, and with video exemplars, these are unpacked as follows:

1. Preparatory up movement, and cyclical down and up movement, where the beginning of one gesture merges with the end of another.
2. When combined with preparatory up movement and cyclical down and up movement, the 'breath' metaphor appears to facilitate momentum and the ability to 'roll' through the notes.
3. A growing awareness of the implicit clockwise or anticlockwise movement (over-shape or under-shape) embedded within ascending and descending 2, 3, 4 and 5-note slurs. The emphasis here is on the engagement of the deltoid muscles in the upper arm, and the direct correlation between tone production and the subtle movement of a pliable and well-aligned 'kinetic chain', where the upper arm, elbow, forearm, wrist and hand are synergistic.
4. When chaining notes that move in different directions together, the hand and forearm 'unit' moves in a way that is essentially elliptical.
- 5.** Double rotary movement, where a counter-intuitive movement to the opposite direction of travel acts to propel the forearm, hand and fingers as a unit, usually to negotiate a leap or to increase volume with a 'ring' in the sound, thereby avoiding brittleness, and the need to 'press' or 'key-bed'. It seems to further facilitate momentum, enhance fluidity, and promotes a lubricated, organic approach to playing.

The following concepts complement the gestural vocabulary, as the student begins to incorporate and coordinate movement from both the upper and lower body. In essence, a whole-body approach facilitates the gestural vocabulary of the arms:

1. activation of the 'core';
2. lateral alignment of the trunk with the arms and hands;
3. adjustment of the feet to offset the weight of the upper body, especially when playing at the extremes of register;
4. the creation of expressive energy through the 'pelvic tilt', a forward and backward tilt of the hips, trunk and pelvis.

As these foundations are implemented and repertoire increases in motor complexity, the three-dimensional, spatial or trajectory information that lies *between* the notes may be learnt with the above gestural vocabulary in mind, one step at a time through 'add-a-

note' technique and 'chaining' notes or groups of notes together at performance tempo. These techniques seem to assist the student to marry the external gestural choreography with an internal kinesthetic map of the musical score, where the movements of their performing body are cyclical, and causally linked to the expressive tonal shape and timbral nuance that is imbedded therein. In effect, the *physical* gestures become an embodied representation of the *musical* gestures used within the score, and the two merge to become intrinsically expressive *tonal* gestures, resulting in an energised spirit and promoting an embodied, indissoluble connection between instrument, sound and musician.

As a golden rule one could say that each note/motif/phrase/movement needs a custom tailored musical — and successively — motor design, which is then learned, consolidated, to be executed in a perfect, reproducible [sic] and optimal way...Playing must be prepared by imagining how body and movement will feel while moving (Wolff, 2012, p.5).

### **What is the data saying?**

1. Proprioceptive awareness, spatial perception and motor coordination can vary between individuals, and could contribute to the rate and ease at which the gestural vocabulary may be assimilated, perhaps due to variation in the ability to detect and imitate subtle changes in body movement. Challenges with body awareness may lead to over-extension of the fingers and twisting of the wrists, both of which appear to cause rigidity in the forearms, thereby inhibiting gestural freedom and overall fluidity of movement.

Many teachers will recognize that some students seem to play with superior motor skill and physical coordination, and are generally able to pick things up more quickly than others. Less noticeable is what may be happening inside the student, and how proprioceptive awareness, spatial perception and motor coordination can vary significantly from person to person, especially as its acuity is age dependent (Ferrel, Crighton & Sturrock, 1992; cited in Smitt & Bird, p. 469) and it can vary across the lifespan, becoming more accurate through childhood and adolescence, peaking in young adulthood and progressively deteriorating thereafter (Suetterlin & Sayer, 2014, p. 313). It is all too easy to dismiss a youngster as being uncoordinated, clumsy or not suited to playing the piano, when they may have other abilities, and just need time to mature until their kinesthetic abilities catch-up. Coined in 1906 by Charles Sherrington to describe our secret sixth sense, proprioception, or the ability to spatially sense where the parts of one's body are in relation to each other,

...provides information on the physics of the body, the momentary distribution and

dynamic of masses, forces acting on the limbs and their highly nonlinear interactions. The maps derived from these complex calculations not only guide body movement, they also (together with touch) sense the size and shape of objects and measure the geometry of external space (Smetacek & Meschsner, 2004, p. 21).

According to Cech and Martin (2012, p.220), 'proprioception is the foundation for purposeful movements such as imitation, reaching, and locomotion'. Specifically, the three commonly accepted subdivisions that comprise proprioception are joint position sense (JPS), or statesthesia, kinaesthesia, or the sense of movement, and dynamic position sense, the ability to monitor position during motion—an amalgamation of statesthesia and kinaesthesia (Proske & Gandevia, 2009; Goble, Coxon, Wenderoth, Van Impe & Swinnen, 2009, cited in Suetterlin & Sayer, 2014, p. 315). With the above in mind, it seems that proprioceptive input must be considered an essential part of any physical activity, and in teaching such a dexterous activity such as pianism, we would do well to consider such matters with more than just passing interest, lest we just get on with teaching our students music. Indeed, proprioceptive feedback is particularly important in instrumental playing (Watson 2009; Clark, Holmes, Feeley & Redding, 2013; Schmitt & Bird, 2013; Carpinteyro-Lara, 2014) and in the gestural pedagogy of expressive conducting (Mathers, 2009), and it may be that the ability to detect and replicate subtle changes of body position and spatial patterns that are so important to a musician's skill set can be taken for granted (McAllister 2012, p. 171). Of interest to this study, is that the uptake of an expressive gestural vocabulary seems to be swifter in some students than in others, perhaps due to enhanced proprioceptive ability. However, what will be of wider significance, are the pedagogical tools that may facilitate gestural uptake, why this might be so, and how these strategies may deepen on our understanding of how one learns to play the piano more generally.

2. In order for cognitive resources to be directed towards concepts involving spatial information, three dimensional directional movement, and expressive ideas more readily, it seems desirable that the student can demonstrate reasonable confidence and proficiency with the 'nuts and bolts' of the piece. The question remains, at what point and in what manner do notation and gestural choreography merge, in what proportion for each student and in what timeframe?

Finn (male, age 13, commenced lessons at age nine, two previous teachers, has been studying with me for four years), *'...say if you don't know a couple of notes then you're a little bit like restricted... but if you do know, know it all fluently and have it all prepared early, then it all just flows real good.'*

Jackie (female, age 12, commenced lessons age eight, has learnt with me for four years) *'...sometimes like if I don't the section very well or something, then like if I don't know the notes, then it is difficult to actually focus on it (body movement) more...Like if I don't know the notes, then it's just hard.'*

With weekly tasks being tailored to each individual and goal directed practice that is cognisant of motor learning research undertaken between lessons, the notation and fingering tend to be imbued with greater confidence, and the implementation of the underlying gestural information that lies *between* the notes appears to be more successful. Individual poeticisms seem to reveal themselves when supported by a solid grounding, where the individual is confident enough with the material to be able to let go of the notes, and think of the piece as more of a dance, where rolling fluently through the spatial patterns that link the notes becomes the main focus. Merging multiple senses can prove challenging, and for some students, the exploration and refinement of gesture and tonal nuance becomes possible only when the playing contains a high degree of automation. For others, notation, gesture and tonal nuance can be implemented with a greater degree of simultaneity. As data analysis progresses, of interest will be the manner in which each student's gestural vocabulary increases in complexity, reliability and reproducibility over time, and what pedagogical tools and practice techniques might encourage this process to occur.

3. Student selected repertoire and a fascination with playing it, seems more likely to provide a vessel in which to foster curiosity, self-efficacy and learning autonomy, whilst providing a level of interest that might facilitate expressive pedagogy and ultimately, promote an authentic connection to the student's expressive inner landscape.

Wendy (female, age 12, commenced lessons at age six, three previous teachers and irregular study periods, this is her second year studying with me), *'...they (the 'songs') just sound nicer and more complicated... I get to learn songs that are awesome!'*

Andrew (male, age nine, commenced lessons at age eight, one previous teacher, this is his second year studying with me) – *'...it [The Goldberg Variations] just hypnotises me. I like it. It's very, very romantic...'*

Kelly (female, age ten, commenced lessons at age four, one previous teacher, this is her second year studying with me), *'I think it [learning famous pieces] sort of makes it more fun... Yeah, 'cause I already know... know some.'*

Based on a preliminary analysis of interviews with the students and my own reflections, I

have come to understand that the environmental factors that might facilitate the uptake of an expressive gestural vocabulary, must include not only the physical environment of the teaching space and the personal and pedagogical interactions therein, but also, the metaphorical environment of the *repertoire* through which expressive pedagogy is disseminated. It seems that if students are encouraged to play what they are *interested* in playing, the whole pedagogical process is imbued with curiosity and a sense of ownership through which a gestural vocabulary may be fostered in a meaningful way. The six case studies and their various repertoire choices appear to demonstrate the versatility of gesture as a gateway to expressive playing, and yet, they highlight the need to treat each student as a unique individual. It may be that giving students permission to express themselves through repertoire that they are affined with could foster the desire to continue their piano studies long term, perhaps due to increased self-efficacy and learning satisfaction.

4. Despite some initial challenges, the students do seem to concur that the use of gesture and body movement is advantageous. They report that it has made their playing feel 'easier', whilst giving them greater technical control and a wider tonal palette to draw from.

Wendy, '*Yeah, [a knowledge of gesture has] definitely helped a lot...If I don't rotate when I play the song, it just doesn't work when I, you know, try...Well, if you actually do rotate, you can actually control a bit of the sound, if you go faster or slower, but if you don't rotate...you don't have much control over the sound...Sometimes I can't play that loud, but if you rotate and it goes faster, it just makes it louder for me.*'

Finn, '*I think that it's worthwhile to study them (gestures) because, well, especially in the (Chopin) Nocturne I'd say that's where a lot of gestures were used. Like it gave it its colour and like...the way it sounds.*'

Andrew, '*...it just feels like I can play dynamics more like ease...easily because like, mm, I'm gliding... I'm like... flying across the keyboard.*'

Kelly, '*...my hands used to be sore when I didn't use like the gestures. So, like I can just progress smoothly without having any pain.*'

Adrian (male, age ten, commenced lessons age six, has learnt with me for four years) – '*Um... it (my playing), it's more um, it's more um, expressive. Um, it sounds more flowing. Um...um...more in, more um...um...um...sounds more like a CD. And it sounds better. (Sounds better. Why does it sound better? Does that...'cause I tell you it sounds better?) No. Because um other people tell me it sounds better. (Other people tell you it*

*sou...?) Not just one person. (Who tells you it sounds better?) Um, random people.'*

Additionally, it is encouraging that the students' parents are able to notice quantitative differences in their child's playing, particularly with regards to improvement in facility, expression and sound quality.

Geoff (Finn's father): *'As a non-musician, I can really hear the difference in the sound when those gestures are used...I feel that the use of gestures to influence the expressive effect of the tone made the overall result more "organic"...'*

Judy (Adrian's mother): *'Yes, that does sound more expressive.'*

Janice (Kelly's mother): *'...it's a much faster and an easier way to learn.'*

In addition, it is interesting that the students are beginning to understand that the intrinsic correlation between sound and gesture can be applicable to frameworks that may at first appear novel, yet are essentially quite similar.

Finn: *'...a lot of pieces will have like similar ways I guess, like how they go up and down... and similar like arm movements for it...'*

Wendy: *'...they (gestures) happen in all the songs that you play...'*

Kelly: *'...once I learn something in a different song and I go onto a different song, that requires the same things.'*

Adrian: *'Each time a get a new piece, it's like, um... um... I just seem to um get it a bit more. Like I understand like the technique and style a bit more... I understand, how, like, you're supposed to be playing.'*

Further, it seems that as repertoire increases in difficulty, some students are beginning to realise the dual potential of gesture as a mechanism that can facilitate both technical skill *and* expressive touch.

Wendy – *'I can actually use the movement in Khachaturian (Sonatina), for, for the right hand to rotate, because it was fast... and then, you can also use the rotation in um, (Chopin) Nocturne, because it just adds more emotion...'*

- 5.** For some students, analogy, imagery and metaphor can facilitate the uptake of the gestural vocabulary, but for others, rhetorical abstraction may complicate this process, at least initially.

It seems that for some students, combining gestural movement with analogy, imagery and metaphor is a potent way to develop their expressive skills. However, for reasons

relating to their level of maturity, their cognitive style and/or the pure uniqueness of each individual, some students may require a more explicit and literal approach to instruction that doesn't rely on rhetorical abstraction, at least in their formative years. It could be that when developing skills relating to emotive or expressive concepts, an approach that utilises the expressive gestural vocabulary may offer a more tangible point of entry that a purely verbal, demonstrative, emotional or philosophical approach may not afford.

6. The reflective process has been beneficial, helping me to achieve a healthier balance between the 'transfer' and 'transformative' (Carey & Grant, 2014) aspects of my teaching. It's been a valuable way to broaden my thinking about what *does* constitutes expressivity and expressive playing, and indeed whether that is the fundamental goal for every student at every stage of their development. It's helped me to clarify what is working well in my teaching, what is in need of review, and more generally, it has helped to rework my objectives and invigorate my methodology, where a collaborative, student-centred environment is prized. In addition, watching videos of myself teaching has yielded some unexpected yet welcomed pedagogical tools. For example, while I started the project seeking to examine the effectiveness of an expressive gestural vocabulary within my students, it has become apparent that I often use an expressive gestural manner when teaching, and one has to wonder to what extent my expressive behaviour in playing and teaching impacts the expressive outcomes that I seek to impart to my students.

### **7. *Implications for Piano Pedagogy***

It is hoped that the results of this study may broaden my own and others' awareness, and complement existing methods for expressive performance instruction in the one-to-one studio. It is possible that teachers might use the insights uncovered to 'reevaluate their own practices and become more purposeful in how they choose to teach expressiveness' (Broomhead, 2006,p.18). It may be that wider circulation of expressive pedagogy would empower teaching professionals with greater knowledge and confidence to approach this mysterious area, one that is often left to the student to learn by osmosis (Raffmann, 1993). The potential reproducibility of gesture as a method of inducing expressive playing may be useful to teachers who seek to work with a diverse student population.

More broadly, this study could be seen to be part of a larger movement that calls for teacher practitioners to examine and reflect on the effectiveness of their pedagogical

processes within the one-to-one learning context. Following advocacy by Tait (1992) and Persson (1996a, 1996b), this research will contribute to an increasing understanding of the nature of effective instrumental music teaching in the one-to-one studio, a process described by Rostvall & West (2003, p. 214) as a 'black box' about which we have very little knowledge. Despite referring to the tertiary context, Carey, Grant, McWilliam & Taylor (2013) seek to deepen their understanding of pedagogical processes in the one-to-one environment, so that it might improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning generally (p. 155), and such a philosophy is echoed here.

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