

Ideas on Tone Production in the Twentieth Century Russian Piano School: A Survey of Pedagogical Literature.

Polina Golubkova

Faculty mentor: Dr. Scott Price
University of South Carolina

The research object

Russian pianists of the twentieth-century have left behind a wealth of resources about Russian teaching approaches. One of the most important features of the Russian Piano School is tone production. The majority of sources were written during the Soviet Union period when borders were closed to interactions with foreigners, and these treatises have never been translated in English. This poster session will give an overview of important sources about tone production both in English and Russian.

Pedagogical Literature in English

The Art of Piano Playing by Heinrich Neuhaus is the only recognized and translated treatise in English. According to Neuhaus music is tonal and the most important task, the primary duty of any performer, is to work on tone. The master has a chapter titled "On tone," where he gives some practical suggestions on how to work on tone production. Neuhaus recommends spending three-quarters of all practicing time working on tone production.

Another pedagogical source in English is *The Russian Piano School* translated and edited by Christopher Barnes. This source addresses several technical and interpretative problems of pianists, including tone production, through translation into English essays by Grigory Ginzburg, Samuel Feinberg, Alexander Goldenweiser, Heinrich Neuhaus, Konstantin Igumnov, and Lev Oborin.

Pedagogical literature in Russian

Russian musicologist and pianist, Alexandr Nikolaev, created the piano method *The Russian School of Piano Playing*, where tone production is the primary tool for learning to play the piano. The focus on tone production starts from the first song a child learns. This method was actively used for decades in the Russian music education system that has national standards approved by The Ministry of Education. Boosey & Hawkes published this method in the English language.

Another work by Alexandr Nikolaev is *The Main Ideas of The Soviet Union Piano School* where Nikolaev explains how Soviet Union pianists understood tone production differently than Western pianists. While Western masters like Rudolf Maria Breithaupt, Friedrich Adolf Steinhausen, Ferruccio Busoni and others consider tone production as an abstract idea and a separate concept from numerous other aspects of piano playing, Russian masters do not separate tone production as a concept. Instead, they incorporate it together with work on articulation, technique, pedaling, and fingering. The book consists of essays about performing and pedagogical philosophies of Konstantin Igumnov, Alexander Goldenweiser, Heinrich Neuhaus, and Samuil Feinberg. Each essay has practical advice, suggestions, and musical examples on how to work on tone production. Alexandr Nikolaev also wrote *The Collections of Essays about history of piano pedagogy and theory of the piano playing*. This book highlights the main ideas of The Russian Piano School.

Unknown to English-speaking audiences is the treatise *Art of Being A Pianist* by Samuel Feinberg. It consists of four articles by the master: interpretation of Bach's works, about Beethoven's piano style, about teaching the main methods of piano and about motion automation. Each article has ideas about tone production.

Another source is *The Collection of Essays about Grigory Ginzburg* compiled by Maksim Yakovlev which gives us a perspective about Grigory Ginzburg's teaching approach. *The Essay about Grigory Ginzburg* as teacher by Galustyan from this collection of essays is an especially significant source about the master's changing teaching philosophy throughout life. Grigory Ginzburg was the assistant of Alexander Goldenweiser, so he followed Goldenweiser's teaching philosophy about tone production in the beginning of his teaching career. Later Ginzburg developed a teaching approach where tone production was inspired by orchestral sound. The essay has numerous music examples with detailed comments.

The Collection of Essays about Alexander Goldenweiser compiled by musicologist and pianist Dmitri Blagoi is dedicated to the life and work of the outstanding musician, Alexander Goldenweiser. Blagoi used the transcripts of Goldenweiser's lectures and his own notes, which he made while attending lessons with the master

The Collection of Essays by Lev Barenboim, who was a professor at St. Petersburg Conservatory. Barenboim wrote an article about how to love and appreciate piano sound and create melodies based on a singing tone.

Pedagogical Thoughts: Selected articles and observations by Dmitry Kabalevsky, who was a Russian educator and composer and one of the main figures in music education in the Soviet Union and Russia. His method books for piano are still popular in Russia. Kabalevsky shows various ideas about tone production in his treatise.

The Collection of Articles about Konstantin Igumnov by Iakov Milshtein. This book is about life and pedagogical values of Konstantin Igumnov, who was a professor at Moscow Conservatory. While the first part of the book is about Igumnov's life and career path, the second part of the book is about his teaching ideas. There are chapters about colors of tone, music and language comparison, and technique issues of tone production.

The Process of Learning to Play the Piano by Gennady Tsypin is a practical guide about piano teaching. Most of master's ideas are based on developing of the skill of audiation and teaching students to listen to sound.

Everyday Work of a Pianist and Composer by Nikolai Medtner is a diary where the composer documented his thoughts about piano playing and composition. Editors combined Medtner's notes in chapters about different piano playing problems and concerns.

The Work of a Pianist by Grigory Kogan is a valuable source of information about tone production. The author has chapters about practicing tone production in different aspects of piano playing: legato, jumps, long phrases etc.