



Taubman Technique: Basic Principles

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I. About Dorothy Taubman

- American Pedagogue resident of Brooklyn, NY
- Studied with one piano teacher- Jacob Nicolai Helman (1885-1979)
- Taubman's work with children
- She attracted students with technical limitation or injuries from major schools: Juilliard, Curtis, Manhattan School of Music, Yale.
- Studied anatomy and analyzed the movements of pianists ("prodigies") = **the coordinated technique**
- She was the founder and professor at the Taubman Institute (1976-2002) at Amherst College
- She was also a professor at the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, Hunter College (NY) and at Temple University in Philadelphia
- She was recognized worldwide for his retraining work with pianist Leon Fleisher
- "Einstein of the piano" - The New York Times

II. Dorothy Taubman's Students

- Yoheved Kaplinsky (Juilliard)
- Joseph Gurt (University of Michigan)
- Beth Levin (New York)
- Edna Golandsky
- Sheila Paige (Keyboard Wellness Seminar, NJ)
- Michael Gurt (Ginna Bachauer International Piano Competition 1982)
- Angeline Chang (Grammy Award- Best Orchestra Soloist)
- Maria Del Pico Taylor (Temple University)
- Robert Shannon (Peabody Conservatory)
- Sondra Tamman (Manhattan School of Music)
- Nina Tichman (Hochschule für Musik und Tanz, Alemanha)
- Father Sean Duggan (University of New York- Fredonia)

III. Institutes: Taubman Technique

- Taubman Seminar- Temple University- <http://www.taubmanseminar.com>
- The Keyboard Wellness Seminar- <http://www.sheilapage.com>
- Golandsky Institute- <http://www.golandskyinstitute.org>
- The Well Balanced Pianist- <http://www.wellbalancedpianist.com>

IV. Personal Experience

- Previous technique approach
- Injuries (2005)
- Taubman Seminar- Cami Hall (NY)
- Retraining: Taubman Technique & Alexander Technique (Temple University)
- Lessons with Maria Taylor, Dorothy Taubman, Edna Golandsky, Sheila Paige, Michael Gurt
- Interviews with Dorothy Taubman

V. Basic Principles

- How to sit at the piano <http://www.wellbalancedpianist.com/bpseatingguide.htm>
- Hand position
- Points of Balance
- Forte (*f*) vs Piano (*p*)
- One note at the time
- Non legato & Staccato (Drops, Bouncing)
- Legato- UP & DOWN
- Rotation- single and double
- In and Out
- Walking Hand & Arms
- Shaping
- Groupings
- Repeated notes
- Double notes and chords
- Octaves

VI. How to use the computer, cell phone and tablets with the Taubman Approach

Healthy Typing- <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yu9n9tdlcgo5j27/AAAjjmt-OJ3ksj28Ccb0rTrTa?dl=0>

Glossary of the Taubman Terms

Abductors – muscles that spread the fingers apart sideways

Adductors- muscles that bring the fingers together

Backward Shift- a forearm movement used to go back into the white keys from the black key area, (due to finger lengths) but the weight on the playing finger always feels the same on each key. The forearm moves backward a tiny bit but, in the playing, the finger is on the spot where it has to play.

Collapse – relaxation of a knuckle (fulcrum) that breaks the natural alignment necessary for coordinate motion.

Coordinate motion- movement which uses the parts of the body involved at their best mechanical advantage and which uses the minimum effort for the maximum result.

Curling- pulling the fingers in at the first phalange and tightening the nail joint, activating the long flexor.

Double Rotation- the double rotation is a combination of two rotational motions : the preparatory swing and the swing to play. First is the preparatory swing which lifts the finger, hand and arm unit very quickly in the opposite direction of the passage, immediately before the playing swing. Second, the playing swing puts the key down assisted by the weight of the forearm unit. The playing stroke is longer and copies the same direction that the previous note played. It must be felt as one movement (For timing say: “swing-play down” or “back- play down”)

Dual Muscular Pul- when the muscles move in contrary directions at the same time,e.g., flexing and extending at the same time.

Enslavement to notation in legato playing, the attempt to physically connect notes that are uncomfortable or impossible to connect causing discomfort

Extensors- muscles that lift the fingers, hand and forearm unit

Flexors - muscles that move fingers, hand and forearm downward

Long flexor- muscles situated in the palm of the hand that extend from the fingertip to the elbow. When activated, they tighten the fingers and wrist.

Short flexor- muscles situated in the forearm that move our fingers downward from the knuckles.

Forearm Rotation- a turning of the forearm/hand/finger unit with the purpose of lifting the fingers and putting them down without effort. It provides the weight of the forearm and hand to assist the fingers in playing the key. The movement originates at the elbow and extends to the fingertips without breaking the wrist fulcrum. Eventually these movements become invisible.

Forearm/hand/finger unit- the alignment of the forearm, hand and fingers which makes possible the synchronization of movement of all these parts.

Forward Shift- the finger is on the spot where it has to play, but in playing, the forearm moves forward on that finger, balancing slightly toward the fallboard. This tiny forward motion used when notes move into the black key area, brings the finger on its nail. Example: If you have to play C to C#, D#, E, E#in the right hand, moving into the black key area, you must forward shift to bring the fingers on the nails.

Grouping- organizing the playing mentally and physically into smaller “chunks” of notes to simplify complex designs. This organizes the playing for fluency and security in speed.

High bridge- an in-coordinate position for the main knuckles, which removes the arm’s support from the fingers and limits their ability to flex and abduct.

In- movement of the forearm/hand/finger unit towards the fallboard

Interdependence- an aspect of the technique that organizes the playing of the two hands together so that the required reflexes are learned as one kinetic experience

Isolation- the disconnection of part of the forearm/hand/finger unit from the whole. For example, the fingers will be isolated from the arm if there is twisting or collapse.

Key bedding -misaiming of energy with excessive pressure to the bottom of the key Sometimes referred to as “digging”

Key spot- the exact place where the finger plays the key. The use of in and out movements assist in locating the optimum key spots.

Minimizing- after the initial rotational training, the process by which the arm motion, not the arm motion, becomes smaller and smaller, functioning in the end as an invisible component of the technique A tiny arm movement makes it possible for fingers to move with freedom

Out- movement of the forearm/hand/finger unit towards the body.

Overshape- a lateral forearm movement that creates an elliptical wave over a group of notes.

Phalanges- bones of the fingers. Each finger has 3 phalanges, the thumb has two.

Point of Sound- the escapement point in the piano key where the hammer is triggered to strike the keys. It is about 3/8 of an inch from the surface of the key.

Preparatory swing- the swing of the forearm/ hand and finger unit which lifts opposite to the direction that the next finger plays, automatically creating the proper swing for the playing finger. There is a preparatory swing for a single rotation when it starts a passage. In double rotations, there is a preparatory swing and a playing swing. It has to be felt as one movement “swing-play down”. Second, the playing swing is in the same direction as the previous note played.

Pronation- turning the hand and forearm over towards the thumb, to place the fingers parallel (straight) on the keyboard with the use of muscles situated in the forearm

Rotation- see forearm rotation

Rotational release- in a rotational technique, the last finger played releases closer to the playing finger, hovering slightly over the key, so that the arm’s support can be brought over the playing finger.

Shaping- curvilinear forearm motion that assists in bringing the fingers to the key.

Single rotation- functions to accommodate movement in opposite directions, such as is required in a trill. This would be a movement from left to right, or right to left which is continuous. The last note of a single rotation must finish straight, parallel to the keys.

Slowing down the key- controlling the timing of the hammer's escapement to produce a warm, rounded tone. The arm is allowed to fall as slowly as it can without inhibiting the free fall.

Supination – turning the hand and forearm toward the fifth finger in a rotational technique with the use of muscles situated in the forearm

Tapping- the light, easy motion of the fingers as they move from the main knuckle ridge.

Twisting- sideways movement of the hand away from the arm at the wrist joint, generally towards the fifth finger side, but also towards the thumb side.

Walking Hand and Forearm- a combination of the adjustment of the hand and forearm as the fingers play down and a slight adjustment upward of the hand and forearm as the next finger lifts. Lifting the forearm/hand/finger unit frees the entire apparatus to swing laterally, particularly in skips.

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