

**PhD in Music Education**

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MUSICALITY AND  
ITS CONTEXTS: A STUDY OF PIANO PEDAGOGY IN  
ATHENIAN CONSERVATORIES**

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# APPENDICES

## (INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS)

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### 'A'S INTERVIEW

This first interview took place in Athens. 'G.M.' is Georgia Markea (the interviewer). 'A' is a name given to the teacher for reasons of anonymity.

#### A1 M1: SCHUMANN, THE FIRST CONCERN

1. **G. M.:** *What were you trying to get out of this particular excerpt?*
2. **A:** I wanted to show her the harmonic progression of the chord, that is, to familiarise her with the procedure of the phrase. Her standard of playing is very good, as she has a very advanced background in technique. I thought it was the best time for her to aim at musicality. I insisted on this particular point because I was certain she could make the grade, now that she has reached maturity not only in technique but also in musicality. All previous levels serve the basic aim, which is actually musicality, and I am convinced that M1, having been studying and playing the piano for six years, is a sufficiently fully-fledged musician to aim at high quality music attainment. She would have been capable of doing exactly that a lot earlier than now, but now she does it with a lot of detail and emphasis.
3. **G. M.:** *Your attitude was quite characteristic at the time when you let her move on to the next phrase only when you were absolutely satisfied with what she had already done. Am I right in stating this?*
4. **A:** Every learner can and must play the pieces to the same standard that a good pianist should have, no matter what his level is. In music it is very important that everything should be produced as well as possible. Otherwise, the result has no relation to music.

5. **G. M.:** *You seemed to be devoted to the quality of the music. For instance, for a phrase that had to be heard like a sigh, you used a wide range of similes to point out the composer's intention.*
6. **A:** Yes, exactly that, since music is a demonstration of sentiment and feeling and so many other human factors. So a teacher, being more experienced and a lot more mature, can work out these concepts. We know that music reflects every kind of passionate state of mind. One of the most important requirements in music is to be willing to reproduce this passionate notion that the composer had in mind. Even the title of the piece itself, which is 'the first concern', states exactly that. We always look for what exactly the title means. Afterwards we try to find how the composer expresses the meaning of the title. I think he does this task by means of his small phrases, his pauses, which appear to be sighs. Suffering is always present.
7. **G. M.:** *Suppose that M1 was a little older would your teaching have changed and to what extent?*
8. **A:** I would have asked her to do exactly the same, because all these pieces are tailor-made for this music level, that's why they can, within this framework of technique, look for and produce music. Repertoire and music level are parallel. What we should aim at at every level should be to render the deeper notions of music. That's the reason why we should choose pieces which are not harder regarding technique for that level, in order to be able to produce the very essence, which is music itself. I would ask the same of any child no matter how old he is. Perhaps, for a slightly older learner the pieces would have been of a harder structure and that would require a lot more technical competence. The basic thing, however, is always the same, that is a quality production of music expressed through phrasing, harmony, and accompaniment, which, if the children cannot instinctively understand, the teacher has to point out to them. Musical essence, which expresses feeling, should be interpreted in several ways.
9. **G. M.:** *If this lesson was the first one on the piece what would you have expected M1 to achieve?*
10. **A:** We would have focused our attention on the right counting and the notes without leaving out matters like sound, dynamics, structure, phrases or pauses. To be honest,

however, I always take good care that the children take notice of the harmonic progression, the phrases, the intonation and the dynamics. I expect them to. I would never have wanted them at first to be in a state like a nuclear catastrophe and then build them up again. I just don't like the idea that we first look at the notes, then we strike the keyboard very hard, as if we were playing notes on a typewriter, and then we add music to it. A very small child, especially if he is a beginner, cannot possibly get the very essence of music. He has, naturally, to go through some 'coarse' musical stages without each note being as if it was played by an older child. When it comes to an older one, I always insist, right from the start, on the right interpretation. A teacher has to start playing the piece first, so that the learner can listen to it and then the teacher, passing remarks on it, can inspire the child to study it, instruct him on his phrases, the sound nuances and ask him to study every detail at home. All those things are necessary for a young student because you cannot ask him right away to produce the ultimate. I never leave the best interpretation till last even if I don't ask for it at the starting point.

11. **G. M.:** *Do you think that M1 responds correctly to whatever you ask her to do?*

12. **A:** She does it less than the girl that's going to follow does. M1 may be a very industrious and obedient girl who follows my instructions regarding technique and musicality, but right deep in my heart, I cannot feel that she is a sensitive music recipient. I am not 100% sure that I should encourage her to make music her main profession. I don't know what kind of sensitivity and potential she can develop as I see her making continued progress. Those qualities are neither deeply rooted nor inborn, as is the case with F, P or M2. Well, how am I to judge whether they have an inherent musical instinct? Just from the fact that if I play the piece only once, or speak to them, for instance, about *ritenuto*, they promptly take steps on their own initiative as soon as the next pieces come up: they feel it and do it. Or in cases where they have learnt only the major chords, as soon as a minor one crops up, they immediately react and play it with a slightly intense tone and a little more sentimentally. You can see their reaction when it comes to something that demands musicality, whereas M1 needs to have everything shown. If this ability is acquired at some time in her music course, since it's not inborn, I just can't tell. I don't know



how far she can get. You see, she is clever, intellectual and is at a good developmental stage.

13. **G. M.:** *Why do you think M1 has taken up a music course?*

14. **A:** Simply because she wants to be a pianist. She probably intends to study something else, but she has a professional attitude towards music. She wants to be good at everything she sets her hands to, and sometimes I think she even stakes everything on her abilities and not for the love of music. That's something I don't really like very much. It is a positive aspect of a person, who wants to be successful, but I don't want to lead her astray and make her believe that she is extremely talented. You see, an excellent pianist has to be something more than an industrious learner. One needs to possess that 'extra something' that M1 hasn't got. I am afraid this is a misfortune for pianists who don't possess this 'extra something' that makes all the difference, although they have got diplomas and have acquired knowledge and technique (for instance, they are fully acquainted with the styles of interpretation). The procedure leading towards a diploma being so exhausting and oppressive for children like M1 – I am sorry to say – I feel unwilling to encourage them towards that. This, of course, doesn't mean that she is not capable of obtaining a degree and eventually becoming a piano teacher. I wonder, though, if anyone should encourage her to get a diploma or to make a career out of it. Now that she is sitting for the Intermediate entrance exams I am at a loss, because I feel responsible for what I am going to advise her to do. Up to now, she has been going through elementary training in music. She could just stop here, so she would have a basic knowledge of music, something that I regard as absolutely necessary.

15. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to add to whatever we have already said?*

16. **A:** No, no. That was all about M1.

## **A2 M2: KHACHATURIAN, A LITTLE SONG**

17. **G. M.:** *Now, what were your intentions in this excerpt?*

18. **A:** M2 was preparing this piece to play at a concert, that's why we paid special attention not only to deeper notions, but how to get over all that hesitation and nervousness as she had to perform before an audience.

19. **G. M.:** *What's your opinion of concerts as a means of learning to play the piano?*

20. **A:** Concerts are an integral part of teaching. Preparing for a concert should be incorporated in teaching because one thing must be one's target: for a performer to share his experience with the audience. For me 'concert' includes children's appearances before an examination Board, ones the students hold in private, as well as all the concerts that a conservatory organises. I make the point that the children should get to know at an early age that whatever they do they don't do for themselves only, or just for me, but to be judged at exams by some other people. On top of that, they should actually share the beauty of whatever they do by conveying it to others. What I quite often tell them is 'listen how beautiful this phrase or piece is. Let us show that beauty to others'. This is hard for them, because to show this kind of beauty one has to play one's best. That is why I always avoid emphasising it. I tell them that this is a very long piece and if there is a tiny little mistake we will try to cover it up as much as possible. I don't press them hard especially at this early age by insisting that they have to be 100% flawless. In Warsaw they made us very nervous by insisting that everything should be heard perfectly and when we were asked to perform a piece we were very tense. I let them get loosened up and if something gets out of order (that is, one note or a bar) that shouldn't really matter. We try to express it as a whole. I have taught them right from the very start of their studies to appear before the public without any apprehension at all.

21. **G. M.:** *That is, you mean that besides preparation for their musicality and technique you boost their morale, don't you?*

22. **A:** Of course, I do. I tell them that we are not machines. If this was a procedure of recording and erasing again and re-recording and so on, we would have to try to get it perfect, but walking on to the stage we make amends for a human mistake. This makes them a lot calmer. On the other hand, I am inclined to stress to them, even from their very first lessons that we do not stop if a mistake is made, but ignore it and go on. They have become thoroughly aware of my instructions that if you stop,

you bring your mistake to light. We don't just withdraw our hands from the keyboard but move on immediately to the next bar.

23. **G. M.:** *So there is some kind of mental preparation, isn't there?*

24. **A:** Oh yes, there is. It has to do with what we call 'learning by heart'. Mentally by heart, I mean. Their pieces are separated into four parts, (that is, phrases or bars), I mean in their minds of course, and they know they have to begin from the directly following four-part unit. They can also analyse the accompaniment. We work out in our minds the changes in chords that take place in the accompaniment, so we don't let them learn by rote. I try to show them the pieces not mechanically, but consciously, depending on their age, knowledge and level of attainment. So I often ask them during their playing, if they make a mistake with a fast gesture, to move on to the next part. On no occasion should they pull their hands away from the keyboard or say 'ah, I made a mistake', so as to let someone else pinpoint it. So summing up, I tell them to walk on to the stage and be prepared to present eighty per cent of the piece leaving a small margin for human error but, if a mistake is made, we patch it up. The faster the patching up is done, the better for us. In this way, on the stage we have the luxury of mental serenity. This is the main reason why most of my students, so far, have been doing quite well in their concerts or examinations.

25. **G. M.:** *Because I heard this piece when it had reached a high point I would like to ask you about this interpretation that seemed to spring from M2's inner world. How did you make it so?*

26. **A:** With little children, since they usually haven't heard much from this sphere of music (I mean the classical one) during their whole course, I usually play the pieces for them. As I play them, or whenever they themselves do that, I just keep an eye on their reactions. M2, of course, is very talented so we have no problem. She likes this piece, as she does her repertoire, which usually includes Schumann, Tchaikovsky or others. Music really does move her immensely. She might be a little more fond of romantics because she is a rather introverted child. At one time when she played Bartok, she was absolutely gorgeous! There are a lot of mood, expression and tempo

changes there, as well as in the Kabalevsky variations, which she has also studied. In both cases she was excellent!

27. **G. M.:** *What do you think is the main reason for her excellence?*

28. **A:** It's something that she feels. I show her the way, of course, by playing the piece many times but I myself am astonished at the quality of her immediate conception. It's that musical instinct that she possesses. My experience tells me that there is a vast difference between my students. This doesn't mean that M2 is a lot more intelligent than the others. M1 is also clever. In her High School, she is the top student and that comes out even in the way she talks. As for M2, you may not think much of her at first sight but she is so rich inside that you can see it in her eyes. Her inner world is so sublimely sensitive that it comes to light in the way she expresses music. She is of a very gentle disposition. You only have to mention something and she is there to absorb it like a sponge. When she comes to the culminating point of inspiration, she reproduces it in musical terms in an instant. Due to her good technique, her flexible hands and the work we have done together we get good results. Since she is a natural musician I regard her as a born pianist.

29. I would like her to take part in a music competition without, at the same time, pressing her hard, because of the extreme competitiveness that really exists in such performances. I am going to get her to take part, next year that is, just for pleasure and, at the same time, so that she can match herself against other participants and assess herself and come to conclusions about her potential.

30. **G. M.:** *Being present at the same excerpt when you were preparing her for the next piece that she was going to study, I noticed that not only did you play it yourself, but you kept on telling her what a wonderful piece it was. Do you think that the appreciation and understanding of a piece of music can be taught?*

31. **A:** Yes, I do. That's why I never enter a classroom unprepared. I study the pieces that I am going to teach my students so that playing them myself I can get the best out of myself. I also select very carefully the pieces I am going to assign to them, so that they are suitable for the purpose for which they are given. For instance, for the improvement of their technique, or even to vary their music topics (that is, lyrical or dramatic ones), to lead them to various musical situations, or to help them learn

something new. I would, for example, like to test M2 further on the modern pieces that require a dynamic performance. Generally, I believe that I have to keep their batteries fully charged. That's where my role lies.

32. **G. M.:** *In cases where one doesn't feel like studying a certain piece, what do you do to persuade a person to play it in the best possible way?*

33. **A:** Take M2, for instance. She doesn't like etudes or exercises. She has never had any trouble with musicality pieces. If I could choose among all the pieces of the same kind that could actually fulfil my purpose, I would have done it. My opinion is that if a child does not like a music piece, he doesn't have to play it. As for the etudes or exercises that most children do not like, I have found a successful way of convincing them. M2 never felt like studying etudes. Her mother used to tell me that she never studied them at home. I have, nevertheless, made them realise that this is like the build-up towards a championship. Music includes technique as well. I tell them that fingers, which I nickname 'little soldiers', must obey the Commanding Officer (their brain), otherwise nothing is achieved. That is, whenever he says, for instance, 'here melodic', they will not obey because they are not trained. I have so far given them pleasure in their success at a kind of championship level by using my voice intonation, my descriptions, by making them expect fulfilment in their progress and by congratulating them, with the satisfaction that we have overcome a difficulty and finally exclaiming, 'look the fifth finger is now working independently', or by my insistence that we never change a piece if we haven't reached our goal. As soon as the students notice that their thumb works, whereas a short while ago, it somehow got stuck, I can see happiness all over their faces just because they have improved their technique.

34. Parents, of course, help me out with the whole procedure. I happen to have some wonderful people who come with their children to the lesson and, at the same time, co-operate with them at home, although sometimes they may be hard on their children. Strict discipline for me must be applied sometimes in order to remind them that their task is to study. I am against letting the child have an uncontrolled initiation. At an early age a learner is led astray. Even grown-ups do that. So I ask parents to participate in the procedure. I ask them to attend their children's classes and they get involved. So I often hear them say 'now, the fifth finger should have

moved' or 'look how the teacher's fingers accelerate. Your fingers should compete with the teacher's'. I always play their pieces to the children as well as to the parents and fully explain to them whatever is wrong. The teacher then, should be the one who should be able to pinpoint the cause of the student's failure in some part of the piece; to be in a position to interpret a student's move or his weaknesses. Then, the student will feel self-confident and will take it as a wonderful game, something that he can really stake his life on. He will trust you because you will have given him concrete and not abstract ways of dealing with it. You will have explained to him how. You must demonstrate on the spot the exact way something is done. Then, you ask them to play it, to make sure that they have understood it. At home, afterwards, he knows what to do and he is not confronted with a dubious assignment. So as soon as they have done those things they get results out of them, so they are happy about them.

35. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to add to what you have already said about M2?*

36. **A:** To be honest, she is my favourite student. I can believe in her with regard to her targets and future attainments. I am convinced that she is especially endowed with talent. I don't know if she possesses Sgouros' [a famous Greek pianist] talent, who, after only a glimpse at the score can immediately play the piece off-hand, but she does have musical talent and a marvellous sensitivity. I am very fortunate since I have a couple of other students who are really talented. A child like this, possessing this kind of instinct, needs to be instructed musically, as well as technically, by demonstrating on the piano or urging her to listen to classical music, since she is studying it. And then I am dumbfounded at the ease with which that girl is moved and absorbs it with that inner urge she possesses. It is this very musicality that leads M2 to find solutions to technical problems. I watch her little fingers moving fast every time she plays something that she really likes. It is an inner need to be heard in a special way and she strives hard to reach perfection. That's all I have to say about M2.

37. **G. M.:** *Thankyou and I think that now we can go on to P.*

### A3 P: BACH, MINUET, IN D MINOR

38. **G. M.:** *I would like to ask you what your main expectations were from this excerpt?*
39. **A:** Here with P, as is the case with all the other children, I tried to become a music transmitter. Most probably P, or all of my students, have some other kind of transmitter too. But like all the other children he may not have sufficient spare time to listen to music. Parents don't seem to listen to music either. So in addition to being a technique instructor, I have to become a model in inspiring and influencing these children in music interpretation and thus making this kind of music more prevalent and interesting for them. To put it simply, not to strike the keyboard but to get a musical notion out of the instrument. I do this even for children who are at a very early age. P is in the third class at the Preliminary level. Even so, right from his first year I keep on trying to achieve this, so I am always on the alert, singing, charging their music batteries, and trying my best to influence them. At this early age, they have no other motivation than me. When they grow up and consciously elaborate on these feelings and add to them their inner urge, then they will be able to have their own opinion on music interpretation. Not to mention that they will have already made it their own. It's not 100/% my task. I affect them very much, but I have to, since they cannot get any relevant experience from anywhere else. Someone has to show the way this music is studied.
40. **G. M.:** *The way you taught not only P, but also all the other children, by singing, explaining and playing the pieces on the piano was characteristic.*
41. **A:** Yes, that's true. I sing, explain and play their pieces. I don't just let them do their studies step by step on their own. Whatever I do, I am convinced that I have prescribed the exact dose. I don't go over the limit. I do not subject them to my own kind of music evaluation, but I think when it comes to an early age, I deem it necessary that they should accept such a bombardment of influences by their teacher.

42. **G. M.:** *So this means that that is not something unconscious, but it springs from your own love for music and makes you sing or play their pieces on the piano. It is something that you do with a purpose in mind, isn't it?*

43. **A:** Yes, that's true. It is a sort of methodology. I definitely enjoy it whenever I do it, but it isn't something unconscious or without any purpose. I can never remain passive and keep on waiting for when and if they are to comprehend music. I even have to show them in detail the way of studying and performing the piece. For instance, I have to tell them 'after a phrase repetition we usually play in piano' something that I used to repeat to P. I always make it my first option to explain everything to them right from the beginning of their attempt at the piece, not leaving even the slightest thing for a later interpretation. I used to tell him that we were going to play it as if it were a sentence that we would want to emphasise. We wouldn't repeat it in the same words. He can understand this because of his personal experience. I used to tell him that whenever we talk we don't behave like machines without using commas, colons etc. When we want to stress the word 'P' in the sentence 'P, you are not right' we have to use the comma after the word 'P' to emphasise it. The meaning of emphasis, contrast or non-monotonous repetition of a phrase is what even the little children should become fully acquainted with. There may be a time when they might understand it on their own, but if they are at P's age, it's a teacher's duty to point it out to them. If you explain a similar case to a sensitive recipient it may not be necessary, since he might have already stored away whatever you had told him then for the first time. In other cases, however, you may be compelled to repeat it many times.

44. **G. M.:** *This excerpt looked as if it had been one of his first lessons, as he was playing the piece from the score. I would like you to tell me the way you normally approach the first lesson.*

45. **A:** At first, we study it from the score. If a child is at a very early age and level, as P is, I don't think you can afford the luxury of allowing him to take interpretation initiative steps on his own. P needs to be instructed like this, because it is only now that he has come into contact with this kind of music and has to learn its codes. For instance, in classical music, whenever we have a phrase, we make it diminuendo and then we instantly inhale before we start the next one. We have to teach such codes.



Nobody is born wise. You have to explain those codes even to a very talented student. That's why I always choose editions which are quite analytical with a lot of interpretations. As for the tiny little children, I just do not like to use original editions since the children are just like a tabula rasa. What are they to choose from? They need some kind of 'catechism'. Beyond that, when it comes to grown up children, you have to change your attitude. I just have to widen the interpretation margin. M. [She gives the name] editions for Bach are my first choice for small children and are generally very detailed, legible and right for finger positioning. I don't think that catechising to a child at a very young age will restrict his mind. If he is endowed with a musical instinct he will be a good recipient from you, as well as from other sources, and will form his own viewpoints, which is what we are actually looking for. If he takes music seriously he will receive a lot of challenge and finally, at some point in the future, he will have to make his own choice. Nobody can at any time find how a talented pianist functions in regard to interpretation. I suppose that he stores away a lot of experiences, which he afterwards works out, and so creates his own personal style. You couldn't ever possibly ask these tiny little children to have their own style at this stage. Finally, I sort of instil my aesthetic concept of music into my students. There will be a day when they surpass it. My small children like P, however, do not possess a musical point of view.

46. **G. M.:** *I'd like to ask you about some statements you made to P or to some other students of yours in your attempt to interpret some notions namely 'the soldiers should obey the General' or the other one 'the grasshopper has to move away'. You left me with the impression that you try to give them some kind of images. Isn't that so?*

47. **A:** Yes, the 'grasshopper' and 'the soldiers' are the leftovers of my previous teaching with P and the other children. Now that he is older, such symbols do not apply now. At that time it was a very useful aid since for all the technique and interpretation cases I used a variety of similes. For instance, portato is actually achieved by imitating a hopping grasshopper. Sometimes now, in order to bring back some pleasant reminiscence that used to take the shape of a very educational game, I come up with those old symbols. P, of course, is very close to that age. For M2 and the other more advanced students I don't use the grasshopper example

anymore. I use them for P because he is actually at the starting point and these similes help me a lot. As for my tiny little children I just avoid using complicated instructions. My lessons in such cases are a lot more explanatory. I use words to make them really get the right result. I never tell them, for instance, 'don't lift your wrist' or anything like that. I tell them 'now your parachutist is landing' or let your hand dive', that is, I use names that they are familiar with and images that make them see things better. I never use expressions like 'get loose'. I usually, as a rule, use the word 'feathers'. As soon as they hear that, they let their hands loose. There is magic in those metaphorical orders, and as soon as the children hear them they become thoroughly aware of what they have to do. Of course, at the same time, I get hold of their hands and lead the way, or I just let them get hold of my hand and let them feel my hand movement. We have a wide range of codes with symbols and metaphors, so they feel at home and absorb ideas a lot better. This is definitely applied at C's level, as well as for all the other children attending the first and second Preliminary level. P is a little more advanced. For him there is no need for such a method of technique approach.

48. **G. M.:** *You did something else with P. You kept on singing the music, using your own inventions as far as lyrics are concerned. For instance, 'make the sound stronger', and at the same time you asked him to sing with you. Would you like to explain that to me?*

49. **A:** I usually sing in order to get him to sing, because if I say to him 'sing' he most probably won't do it, as he may be nervous. It is something that I would call 'group psychology', and my leading it makes him follow me. We become a team. I regard singing as very important, since with it one can approach music in a simpler and more natural way. If I ask him to make a crescendo or a diminuendo he may not have as yet become thoroughly aware of, if he is a musically gifted child, he could succeed in it a lot easier with his voice. If he does it with his voice and listens to it he will most probably be able to give the right intensity to his fingers. If he doesn't sing it in order to understand it, as this communication with his brain is absolutely necessary to a conscious performance, he will never be able to play it well. One finds no technique problems with one's voice, as it is a natural means of expression. So by singing a learner will get loose and, as a result, I make him fully realise what

this crescendo I am talking about is, and get him to be able in turn to do it with his fingers. The latter naturally obeys his voice and brain since he has already made it an integral part of his experience. My singing by itself cannot fully acquaint him with it. That's why we not only sing together, but we count it singing to improve the children's rhythm.

50. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to add for P or to this excerpt?*

51. **A:** No, let's move on to C.

#### **A4 C: JOHN THOMPSON, EASIEST PIANO COURSE**

52. **G. M.:** *At the beginning of this excerpt I noticed you standing at some distance from C and the camera could not actually get you. Did you do that for a particular reason?*

53. **A:** I generally do this not only to listen to their sound from a distance, but at the same time to leave them on their own, because at a certain moment they are going to be alone during their presentations. If I am close to them all the time, and keep on instructing them, they are going to lose their autonomy. I just want to keep a balance, not to make them feel like little ponies that are led by a horseback rider. I have to prepare them for reasons of morale to get the feeling that they are autonomous individuals. In particular, for some final rehearsals (before a concert, an examination or when a piece has been completed) I always say to them: 'play', and then I move away from them. Then they know that they are on their own, and I am not going to talk, sing or instruct them in any way. I have to teach this to them: our aim is to let them stay on their own on the stage and to present a piece to an audience that would be at some distance away from them. There and then, they will be responsible for everything as well as the masters of the whole state of the hall. At this point I also instruct them how to 'patch up' their mistakes without making them evident. I tell them 'the better the patching up has been covered up the more rewards it will bring in the end'. I always take good care to praise them for a very good 'patching up'. I try not to intervene whenever they have such rehearsals before performances. They are fully acquainted with what their final goal is: to begin and

bring the whole piece to an end without any interruptions, even if they have missed some notes.

54. **G. M.:** *So it means that notes for you play a less significant part in piano playing, does it? If so, what would you say has greater significance?*

55. **A:** I don't want the children to be nervous because of the notes. Naturally, we are interested in getting them right, especially for the advanced levels. What is more important though is the right interpretation and musicality of the work, as well as the good quality of the sound. When there is a mistake in the notes, what counts more is not to bring it to light. It is as if we were to say, 'here it is. We made a mistake!' If the performer does not pause, then neither the rhythm nor the interpretation will have been spoilt. A note will simply have gone astray. The fact that I never interrupt them during a rehearsal is a matter of educational procedure, which is to get the children used to what they have to do at their final stage, which is to present a piece before a crowd that is beneath them, mute and motionless. Now and then, I get carried away and do intervene. I can see in the video recording that, at a certain point, I come forward and speak out my own opinion. You see, once in a blue moon, I tread on forbidden ground. I get carried away and intervene about some mistake made. My sincere aim is not to intervene, though.

56. **G. M.:** *What else were you trying to get out of this excerpt?*

57. **A:** I talk to her in symbols or comparisons. Instead of using the word 'fingers' I replay it with the word 'grasshoppers'. I also talk about 'feathers' whenever I refer to hand looseness. I could, of course, have talked about a 'toad' instead of a 'grasshopper'. No matter what the symbol is, it'll suit me fine if it fulfils the end it serves. I picked out 'grasshopper' because I want her to lift her hands and let them fall exactly the way a grasshopper hops along. I absolutely agree with the Russian School, which insists on playing portato, that is, the child cannot play legato if he hasn't learnt to let his hands fall loosely with every single finger. Not only on a specific octave, but on the whole keyboard, so that the hand can stretch out and make the arm flexible for any part of the keyboard. A grasshopper or a parachutist fall in such a peculiar way that it brings images to a learner making him able to grasp the metaphor. I want them to learn to let their hands fall on the piano, as they

would have done if they had fallen in a parachute fall exercise. Quite often I talk to them about 'drops of water'. I tell them 'it's falling... falling... falling, now it's still hanging in the air, but now 'splash it goes'. If I don't teach them this free fall of the hand and am not able to position their hands within the first six months by putting into use these exercises, on no account will I go on to legato.

58. **G. M.:** *At one point you told her not to move her hand off the keyboard because she was going to 'smash it up'. You appear to place a lot of importance on her hand position.*

59. **A:** For me, hand positioning is very important. This particular child began with another teacher who had, unfortunately, not taught her the basic rules, and when she came to me she was very stiff. All the children who begin music with me learn all these things right from the very first day. They reach a good stage no more than six months later. As for C, I had to insist on it, not only in the lessons where you were present, but I keep on doing so even now that she is at a better level. She still carries with her weaknesses from the past. We have even named separately every part of the hand after a peculiar member of a grasshopper's body, in connection with the free or the loose falls. We very loosely lift the wrist, which carries with it the rest of the fingers. We reposition the grasshopper. It moves upwards away from the piano and falls down. Sometimes the very same 'grasshopper' is called 'parachutist'. The symbol that the teacher chooses must be known to a child so that the latter can be familiarised with it a lot easier when the demonstration is put on, so the goal can easily be achieved. If you just tell him 'loose' that doesn't mean anything to the child, but if you talk to him about 'a drop of water' that is about to splash from the tap, then he will loosen up his hands like the drop that is slowly falling. Sometimes I ask them to get hold of my hand and then they realise what I meant before. Another metaphor is the word 'puppet'. I lift his hand (away from the piano) and let it fall as if I had let the string free. I do all these things from the very first lesson, before laying their hands on the piano. Without actually instructing them, I come round to the first basic notions of the theory of the 'loose fall of the arm' either with the 'drop of water' or with the 'puppet' that I am holding with its 'string'. We do all these during the first two lessons, that is, we suspend our hands and we usually make some movements that help the children understand what a loose hand means. With

the various symbols the children not only understand better what you mean, but they see it as something like a game and enjoy it. If they are carried away then I tell them, ‘hey, this is slow motion. It’s not like the “Muppet Show”. It’s very important that they do these in slow motion in order to understand. One needs to dig up tricks suitable to every occasion.

60. **G. M.:** *Do you then believe in slow studying?*

61. **A:** Oh, yes, of course, I do very much so, I’d say. At the Preliminary Level for me everything should be played very slowly so that the hands can be properly positioned. As for the other levels, I have no fixed rule that says ‘ah, now slowly, then separately and after that fast’. My opinion is that slow study serves the purpose of making a child realise that there are some difficulties, for instance, fingering, the wrist position or an arpeggio. Slow studying makes us conscious of what we want to succeed in. How slow the tempo is going to be and for how long, depends on the ability of a child to familiarise himself with his aims. Methods of studying vary according to a child’s ability and to what difficulties each piece of music involves.

62. **G. M.:** *You talked to C, as well as to the other children, about a study that you called ‘packet’. What did you exactly mean by that?*

63. **A:** I learned this from Nelli Semitecolo. I am very much obliged to her. This invention belongs exclusively to her. We strike the notes of an arpeggio simultaneously, as if it was a chord. That is why she calls it the ‘packet’. Thus the placing of the fingers becomes the business of the pianist, and then he knows how to move his hand precisely from one position to another. It helps the children to get to know by heart the position of the fingers. If there is an arpeggio repetition, by changing it to a chord they realise right away what remains unchanged. I personally use this method to study and have found that it helps me a lot. So because I find it very useful for myself, I also use it for the children’s studies. They learn the accompaniment as if it were chords instead of arpeggios, so with the similarities or differences that they notice they memorise it fast.

64. **G. M.:** *Something else that I would like to ask you about is the ‘listen to it’ that you kept on telling C.*

65. **A:** It is very important for me that children learn at an early age to listen to what they are playing. Sometimes, due to the difficulties that they find in a piece, they fail to listen to what they are playing. Whatever happens with the fingers, what is heard is what counts most.

66. **G. M.:** *I would also like to ask you, if I may, some questions about this particular piece of music by Thompson, which is for four hands. Was it your own choice and for a particular purpose or was it a prescribed book that the conservatory usually regards as compulsory for this level?*

67. **A:** It was definitely my own choice. I regard this 'Easiest' book by Thompson as very good because it starts with separate hands, and beginning from the middle 'doh', at the same time the right hand is in 'Soh' clef and the left one in 'Fah' clef. So it is useful for reading the notes on these clefs. What I change in this Method is that I ask them to play portato instead of legato for the first four to five months of their studies. Portato is the foundation for building up the children's technique. By the way, I talk to them about note duration, 'flats', 'sharps', counting or generally theory topics. I still talk to them using symbols. Pictures that are in this book, are always a great help to me. There is the 'dwarf, the hand-clapper' who claps his hands and shows them the tempo.

68. **G. M.:** *Before beginning you told her 'now I am going to acclimatise you' and began clapping your hands. What did you mean exactly?*

69. **A:** I just tried to make a game out of it. I was the 'dwarf, the hand-clapper', and showed her the tempo. You see, she tends to play at a fast pace. I didn't want her to count with her hands, or even with her mouth. I just wanted her to feel the time by listening to clapping. She knows quite well that the tempo the clapper begins with does not change on the way at all. In this first text I take the opportunity of working portato and give them the meaning of rhythm. In the second text, I make some amendments in the score asking them to play legato in two, three or four notes. So at the end of the first year the learner plays legato, but restricted to two, three or four notes. What I finally manage to do is to create a well-positioned and loose hand on the piano. From there on we can really take off to success and can handle a lot more

difficult pieces. I believe that I have to do all these things during the first year, so that they get the right qualifications to carry on.

70. **C** is very talented, and very intelligent, but, unfortunately, has a very bad background, so I am trying hard to help her to get over her bad attitude. That's what holds me back. **C** being at this stage, I do what I would have done if she had started playing the piano just now. That is, I have visualised my future targets, which I am trying hard to reach, using easy popular symbols for a child. I avoid using dubious theories about music, and I restrict myself to explaining everything in a suitable way for a child, since I have to deal with children of five to six years old. They cannot add up simple fractions in Arithmetic at school. They learn these things by experience. The tick-tock of a clock must fit in a clap, and these are the quavers for a child. This is the only way that they can understand me.

71. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to comment on C's lesson or add to this excerpt?*

72. **A:** No, no, let's move on.

#### **A5 M1: CZERNY, ALLEGRO VIVO, IN C MAJOR**

73. **G. M.:** *As for this excerpt, I wonder what you were trying to get out of it.*

74. **A:** I wanted her to make the right movement of her fifth finger, pay attention to the position of her hands and see which fingers to use each time. One has to go along with what the score says in connection with the fingers, but the piano tutor now and then must interfere, taking seriously into account the child's hand structure. He avoids letting him use a certain finger that's stated in the score, thus covering up any of the learner's hand flaws. That's what I usually do. I train it on some exercise alongside a child's weakness, but, when it comes to a music piece, if I can, I avoid it. If this is not possible, for instance, if the piece is an etude, then, the child has to obey and exercise his hand. That is, I try to avoid an awkward finger position in pieces where we are servants to music, whereas in the etudes or exercises, where the selection of the fingers is exactly made for a technical purpose, I don't offer him a hand. It is apparent that I do my best to explain everything to the learner in full detail so that he can understand it.



75. **G. M.:** *You paid a lot of attention to fingering. Do you believe that the right finger choice, besides the technique part that it plays, is, at the same time, a contributing factor towards a better sound quality?*

76. **A:** Not necessarily. For me, a learner must train his fingers to be of equivalent strength and dexterity, in order to be able to produce the perfect sound for every specific case. Nevertheless, I always make an effort for every piece that's not an etude and requires musicality and a better sound, to make it convenient for them by showing them the most suitable fingers. Our aim in the technique etudes is to make all the fingers autonomous and powerful, that is, to reach the same level of dexterity, although they are not by nature made the same. We concentrate on the conception and explain why the first finger plays like that, but the fourth one quite differently. Therefore, we try together even to stretch out their hands and make every finger play with an equivalent intensity. For every finger we have to find a solution or a 'remedy'. The fourth finger can never play as powerfully as the thumb, but that does not mean that we have to leave it inert. We will not ban it. [She laughs]. Children know very well that for their etudes we set targets, and we have to do everything in order to reach them. There is a solution to every technical problem.

77. **G. M.:** *You often kept repeating the order, 'get hold of it and keep it in your mind'. What did you mean exactly?*

78. **A:** I meant it in various ways. Firstly, as motion, that is to give the harmonic progression to each phrase, the music structure or the development of music. Secondly, I was looking for the technical conception. I wanted her to know that her fifth finger was to play the most important note, which the previous phrase had led her to. That was the main reason why I used to say, 'get hold of it and keep it in your mind. Keep an eye on whatever you are going to do and then get cracking'.

79. **G. M.:** *You also asked her to play it at a slow pace.*

80. **A:** Yes, that is true since she could not get it at a fast pace yet. There was a chance for her to understand it and succeed in it at a slower pace. For me, if she had not managed to get it right at a slow pace she would never have succeeded in it at a fast one. Only at a slow pace would she be able to comprehend the hand movements and any mistakes that she might make. She most definitely would have said to herself

‘what was the teacher telling me? Ah, to let the weight of my hand fall on the fifth finger’. This way, she would have been able to get something more and, at the same time, produce the best possible sound.

81. **G. M.:** *What do you mean when you refer to a ‘good sound’ and how does this come out?*

82. **A:** I mean the one that serves music at that very moment: the sound that the composer is looking for. A soft sound would be excellent in a Nocturne, but not in any other piece that fits the quality of sound of a percussion instrument. The best sound is attained by letting the weight of the hands fall on the tips of the fingers, that is, it comes out only from a loose hand never stiffened up. That’s why I always start teaching them portato, in order to let them be at ease with every key they strike. Beyond that, I never allow any awkward movement or stiffened finger, which means moving on to the next note without having carried the hand weight to the next finger. At this point, I might be wrong in some way and about some of the things that I have said so far, but this is my opinion and only mine.

83. **G. M.:** *That’s what I am really interested in. Would you have anything more to say about M1 and this particular lesson?*

84. **A:** It is a case of a child that needs a teacher’s special insistence on convincing her about certain things. That’s why I still insist on her slow studying, as she tends to play at a fast pace, although she has been my student from the beginning of her piano studies. I have not managed to make her like slow studying yet. She wants to conquer speedy piano playing as early as possible. She gets excited by speed. This is the outcome of her personal ambition to succeed as soon as possible, but she forgets that the slow study is the only means of doing that. She wants to impress people and herself by using speed for that. This could be good but she has to reach that stage through a gradual and steady study. I must always insist on harnessing her and yelling out to her ‘it’s not ready yet’. Don’t be in a hurry’. One of the things that she has to master is being in a position to judge by herself when something is not ready. It is an integral part of a learner’s home assignment to be able to classify his needs regarding sound, expressiveness, notions and tempo. That’s all I have to say. Let’s go on to F. It’s her turn now, isn’t it?

85. **G. M.:** *Yes, yes, it is. Yes, let's move on to F and thank you very much for your help so far.*

**A6 F: BERTINI, ETUDE, N. 7**

86. **G. M.:** *Would you like to talk about F and the excerpt?*

87. **A:** As you might have noticed she even made mistakes in her notes, although she is a talented girl and should have already learnt it very well. F, unfortunately, is one of those children who are not willing to study hard. She has, however, a wonderful ease in expressing her playing musically, so in the end it is always a wonder how she can play as well as all the other children who do study hard. She is dexterous enough in regard to technique and musicality. This came out clearly during the same lesson, when she was playing Tchaikovsky. It is, nevertheless, a very hard case for a child, since she doesn't use her brain much. I have made an analysis and think that I have found the cause of it. It is because she comes from a very rich family and has got everything at her disposal. She even started her primary school lessons with a specialist teacher-coach at her side for every school subject. Those teachers, apparently, prepare everything for her, so she gets everything served up to her on a plate. She is taught everything without having to use her brain. She gets everything ready-made. Whenever I ask her to read a piece, she constantly expects me to do everything for her. In the end, she learns it by just listening to it, as she is not as yet used to studying the notes on her own. She finds it hard even to think by herself about the notes and which finger to use for striking each key. She is unwilling to follow that procedure. She just sits there after I have done so many corrections, and then she will play the piece, like a sponge that has sucked up whatever I have taught her. That is, she doesn't take a serious active attitude towards the score, just to think for herself 'what have I got here? Ah, I've got a repetition of the same music phrase with the same fingers and at this point a change takes over'. F never does this. She expects music to come out at some point by having listened to it mechanically. In cases when she really does learn a piece, you get the astounding result showing that this is the product of a person who really understands the deepest notion that music involves. But before that, my God, she has well and truly tormented me.

88. **G. M.:** *At one point, you told her 'it's not enough for me that you have understood the meaning of the piece. Now you yourself must study it and make it your own'. You see that she quite clearly understands you thoroughly, but the time she devotes to her studies is not enough to make it show.*
89. **A:** Oh, yes, I know that she is quite intelligent, a good recipient, and possesses a good ear for music. In short, she has got a superb talent for music. She also studies the cello and as far as I know, she is quite good at it. If she were a little more industrious and autonomous in her studying and did not expect everything from her teacher, she would have absorbed a lot more repertoire and faster as well. Her fingers are quite flexible, so they can move fast along the keyboard and her musicality is extremely well-developed.
90. Well, on my part, I do everything to hold her back from making any mistake in connection with her playing. For instance, I make an effort to make her, right from the beginning, keep the sound intensities between her hands independent. That is, I never let her accompaniment cover the melody. In other words, I always keep an eye on whatever she does. And the result is that she plays very well, but at a very slow pace. So I am afraid that, somehow, sometime in the future, she will sink to the bottom if she keeps on lagging behind with homework.
91. **G. M.:** *When you told her, at a given moment that that particular etude was very beautiful, did you do it for a special purpose?*
92. **A:** I wanted to inspire her and help her love this piece. You see, an etude for children is generally something that they regard as a means of practising their technique, so they don't consider it as musically beautiful. As I was playing it to her I told her that it was an excellent piece (I know that she does like all the pieces that I usually play before her), which, besides its technical aim, was very attractive, as all the Bertini etudes are. It is a kind of stimulus that I use to make her study her pieces although I know that F does love music.
93. **G. M.:** *You also told her 'we separate a study into a technical and a musical part, but I want you to do both parts musically, beginning with notes, nuances or whatever is in the score and adopting a very slow tempo'. What exactly did you mean by that?*

94. **A:** For me, both parts entail the musical element. I want everything done to perfection, but at a very slow speed. The first stage, for me, is studying at such a slow tempo that everything in the score can be implemented. Everything to be in order, that is, the accompaniment a lot softer, the melody to be clear, and every nuance, or phrase, and so on. I expect them to perform everything right from the very first lesson, but, of course, at a slow tempo. Mind you, I remind every child that the tempo depends on what stage he has brought the piece to, his potential, such as how good he is at *prima-vista*.

95. **G. M.:** *Now that you mention prima-vista to what extent do you think it could help a person learn the piano?*

96. **A:** I take it as being a great help. It encourages students. It is like a vitamin. The immediate absorbing of the musical work, in general, is a very good beginning for any musician. Our aim is to go through the first stage where we learn to read the score as fast as we can. By the way, I will not let any student go through this stage without paying particular attention to it. What I mean is that notes, as well as music and everything else, should be well in order. Nuances, phrases, pauses, the harmonic progression, or the notions of the piece should describe the exact meaning of each part. That's where tempo must be slow, so our antennae should be wide open to see that everything is performed in the way the composer would like, even if it is our first contact with the score. Although this way of studying is slow, only in this way are we going to learn a piece within a short time. A child should be trained to learn this procedure of studying at a slow pace, but in a correct way, that is, using his brain consciously but never mechanically. To use codes to be able to say, 'here we meet the same phrase, but with some slight differences'. Then, afterwards, he has to learn never to get tired of repetition of those points that need some kind of improvement in music or technical terms. For me, this is the first phase of studying that a child has to complete as soon as possible, so that in the next stages he enjoys what so far he has already learnt and is enabled to convey it to an audience without having to have the assistance of the score. As for F, all these things are what you are forced to say again and again without ever getting tired of it. She is the child who never does any of the above on her own. [She laughs].

97. **G. M.:** *Would you like to add anything to what you have already said about F or her lesson?*

98. **A:** Oh, no, let's move on to the next student.

#### **A7 M2: BACH, PRELUDE E FUGUE, IN D MINOR**

99. **G. M.:** *What did you aim at in this excerpt?*

100. **A:** Deep down in my mind I had the intention of making her understand the important role that the study of technique plays in playing well pieces of Bach, or composers of the same era, or pieces like the one by Grieg, which M1 played at the end of the same lesson. That's why I began the lesson with an etude by Bertini, and then I asked her to play a piece by Bach that we see in the excerpt, and went on with Czerny and then with Grieg. I believe that technique and musicality must be approached, if that is possible, simultaneously. I place a lot of emphasis on technique, especially with learners of M2's age. I never let anything be performed at random. Etudes, scales and exercises are, of course, my best asset, generally, in approaching technique. My teaching of technique is thoroughly exercised by me in each and every case. The children know that there are two parts to their homework: technique and musicality. Each part must always consist of some elements of the other one. However, to get to musicality we have to pass, first and foremost, through technique. Technique might be one of our targets, but it is a servant to the music. I always tell the children 'here, we have a scale. If you hadn't studied it by itself, you wouldn't have been able to play it now, when you came across it in this piece by Bach', or I might even say to them 'here we have an arpeggio that we studied by itself, but now it has to be played with all your musicality, as it is found at some point in this piece', or go further and say, 'look, here is a portato that we have practised well by itself, inhaling at every note'. In a general sense, I always make reference to some parts of their music pieces that they have performed excellently, so in this way I compensate them for having spent so much of their time particularly on that part of technique. In this way, they become aware of the fact that technique helps their pieces to become a lot easier, in a methodically adopted way, not

compelling us, thus, to seek extra time to work on difficult points in the piece. In short, they get to know what an important servant technique is to music.

101. **G. M.:** *By the way, how would you define technique?*

102. **A:** Technique is the means of expressing the essence of music. Without technique, not only can we not express music, but hardly ever can we convey its meaning to others, which is our main target. A pianist without good technique is like a person without a tongue, a musician without hands, or even an athlete without legs. Technique is a prerequisite, not the final goal.

103. **G. M.:** *How does a child get to the stage of expressing what the composer intends in music?*

104. **A:** Technique cannot be separated from expressiveness. They must be like two things in parallel. I never make them function separately and just wait for one to be completed before moving on to the other. I choose pieces, which the child can cope with as far as technique is concerned, so that he can achieve the utmost in his interpretation. Having done our best for technique we normally get the best results in interpretation. I dare to demand from my children a variety of sound intensity, a very good crescendo, or getting the semiquavers equivalent and fast in cases where I am absolutely sure that I have taught them, and I take it that it is within the child's level and potential. The progress of both music and technique is, without any doubt, simultaneous. Children are well aware, however, that technique precedes music. No effort in music ends with technique. A piece cannot be interpreted or approached musically if we haven't worked well on technique. I always insist on the children getting the meaning out of it. I always maintain that 'we succeeded in getting a piece right after we had overcome some problem in technique'.

105. This way they appreciate what quality means and understand their progress right through without getting the wrong idea that playing fast is good enough for them. It is important that they have the sense of being successful in something even when they are tiny little children.

106. **G. M.:** *One of the most characteristic things that I've noticed during the performance of this excerpt as well as in most of your other sessions is how much*

*you encouraged and praised whatever your students got right. It's something that you do for a special purpose, isn't it?*

107. **A:** Yes, there's something very personal in it. You see, I am a very enthusiastic and extrovert person. A teacher is not only led by instinctive preferences in methodology, but is quite often urged on by his own personality. I am a person who expresses feelings very passionately. I often praise them in order to encourage them. I should, of course, be more categorical and forceful and conceal my feelings when they are present, so that they can demand more from themselves. A 'bravo', I think is good enough for them and it's within the teaching framework. It's not right to let an achievement go without a reward. The very same child that is successful does expect anything in that respect. I do this for another reason too, that is, for him to realise when he has done something outstanding. He may be quite aware of this, but whenever the teacher asserts it, that's when he really gets the most satisfaction. As for me, I think I carry it too far.

108. **G. M.:** *In the same lesson, to make her understand the meaning of a piece by Grieg, you played for her another piece by Constantinides [A modern Greek composer]. If I am not mistaken, I noticed that you try especially hard to make the meaning of a piece comprehensible. Do you believe that the deeper notions of a music piece can be taught?*

109. **A:** Of course, the meaning of a music piece can be taught. Everything is in the score. It is very important for children to know that they have to perform the score exactly as it is written. That's where musicality lies. They may be led astray by giving an extra sound intensity to a note or failing to accelerate. During that particular lesson I would tell her that she could find everything in the score since this style of music is not well known to her. You see, accenting on a weak point is a stylistic trend of this kind of music, so we cannot ignore it. When it comes to Bartok, for instance, if you don't handle staccato, accentuation or accelerando, you miss the very essence of the composer's notions. Often score symbols have embodied the essence of the piece as well.

110. **G. M.:** *Is there a composer whose notions are a little more difficult to be taught to children?*



111. **A:** Yes, as far as I am concerned, all the Romantics, and the composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, are a lot more difficult than the classical ones. They involve certain peculiar passionate states of mind, that's why their pieces are handed out to musically advanced students. The Contemporary ones have rhythmic and technical difficulties or tempo variations.

112. **G. M.:** *During that session you played a new piece for her and told her how beautiful you thought it was. Do you believe that a teacher can influence his students to understand the meaning of a music work and love it, and if so, to what extent?*

113. **A:** A teacher adopting a positive attitude and being enthusiastic, I believe, can definitely affect them. I can say that in M2's case I tried to press on her my own likings. Quite often, I wonder if in the end I do oppress them with my taste. I don't think there is any other solution to it. As I was telling you, by catechising my students, in the end I quite often pass on my own attitude towards a piece of work. I do, of course, let them make their own choice between two or three pieces of the same difficulty or of the same era that would, in my opinion of course, offer them equal practising value. So up to a certain point, you see, I let them have some kind of choice. In a general sense I believe that I do show a positive kind of preference towards the pieces that I would like to teach, so I can create in them the proper disposition towards them. Tiny little children, who normally haven't been listening to a variety of music pieces, can hardly ever develop by themselves an assertive attitude towards music. So I usually perform them in front of them and exclaim, 'listen how beautiful it is'. Then I go on with another piece and in turn ask them, 'which of those two do you like most?' So they make their own choice. I am of the opinion that as Greek society stands at present – where the children hardly ever get any chance of listening to classical music, other than me playing it on the piano – I have no other choice but to inspire and affect them in their evaluation of what is good and what is bad.

114. **G. M.:** *Would you add anything else to whatever you have said so far?*

115. **A:** No, I don't think so.

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

116. **G. M.:** *Would you say that my presence at your sessions affected their development in any way?*
117. **A:** No, no, not at all, I'd say. There were times, of course, when I may not have been at my best, or when my morale might have been very low. This naturally might have been so, even if you were not present.
118. **G. M.:** *Being a very experienced teacher who has taught in more than four conservatories makes me inclined to share your opinion of what is generally happening with Music Education in Greece. Would you please do me a great favour and say a word about it?*
119. **A:** I can with certain talk about the difference between the music education system in Greece and England, because some of my students are studying there at the moment. In Greece, no music institution is ever tested out in regard to quality of services through a panhellenic examination as it is in England. There the children sit for an examination at an academy, for instance the Royal Academy of Music, and the criteria are the same for every child, no matter where he completed his music course before. So the children will be accepted according to their educational qualifications, regardless of whether they came from a private or a state-subsidised conservatory, like the COA in our country. In England they have a pre-defined standard. In Greece such a thing does not apply, because the children come from various conservatories that exert different policies, and use a variety of teaching methods and repertoire, although the diplomas and degrees they get are given the same recognition. If the English way of testing were adopted in Greece, we would not have all those differences that exist among the various conservatories. Unfortunately, every school of music is completely independent and autonomous, so it follows its own policy, applies its own criteria, and levels of studies, and lays a lot of importance on discipline and targets, and, worst of all, treats its 'clients' as a means of bringing in profit. The degrees or diplomas that are awarded most of the time are hardly ever under any kind of state supervision. Typically throughout a piano course they award degrees that are of no value at all, compared to others that require hard work and involve very impartial and strict examinations, but, as I said

before, both are recognised by the state as equivalent. You see, there seems to be some spirit of intrigue there somehow.

120. **G. M.:** *Don't those conservatories ever offer a student the chance of getting some kind of Music Education, whether he is going to become a professional or not?*

121. **A:** I know that all students cannot become professionals, but even a student who has no professional targets has the right to get the best possible education available up to the level that he wishes. He might want to drop out before completing the Intermediate Level. This doesn't mean that a teacher has to be lenient enough to take him to that stage, no matter how inefficiently a student has been taught. As for me, my conscience is as clear as crystal, because I have given my students such knowledge and relevant information that, even if they only reach an amateur stage, they are able to play well and enjoy music just for its own sake. I am not of the opinion that everyone should get the highest diploma. I would be very happy, however, if there was a kind of committee which would investigate the quality of work done at all conservatories, so we could get the uniformity among them which doesn't exist now. In our country we rely on a teacher's conscience and disposition to devote himself to his duty and bring results. But if he himself is not well educated it is only natural that he will not have much to offer. That is a vicious circle. A teacher needs to be a responsible person, not only to his students, but to the parents who entrust their children's education to them. I am sorry to say so, but a large number of piano teachers are not well qualified, that's why we get this mess with regard to uniformity of Music Education in our country.

122. **G. M.:** *How do you interpret the lack of uniformity among the conservatories since it is known that regularly, especially in Athens, the same persons teach in more than two conservatories at the same time, as indeed you do?*

123. **A:** The teacher is not the one who makes all the difference at a conservatory. The same teacher if he is a good one, will do his best, no matter how many schools of music he teaches at. The director of a conservatory is the man who affects the running of his school. It all depends on how lenient or otherwise he is at the examinations, or how friendly he likes to be with his 'clients' and the criteria used in handing out diplomas or degrees.

124. A good teacher, even under these circumstances, can produce good quality work. He might be a little partial towards a student by recommending him for certain examinations, even if the latter is not as yet up to the required standard. He usually, however, abides by his principles. The director of a conservatory should be capable of choosing his teachers and allocating them to positions where they are most suitable. Elementary classes, for example, need experienced and qualified teachers whereas what mostly happens in the private conservatories is that those classes are undertaken by inexperienced ones without a degree. At this stage I am absolutely certain that teachers should possess a lot of knowledge and have gone through special training and, at the same time, should be patient and fair, strict and loving. As for the advanced classes, it will be too late if the foundations haven't been laid before the final structure. Much more particularly at this stage a teacher has to be a soloist himself, so that he can instruct his students in stage secrets, which are always absolutely necessary.

125. **G. M.:** *What impressed me most is the fact that although you are an 'A' Teacher and consequently, you would only be asked to teach at advanced levels, as is usually the case in Greece, I know it is your personal choice to have classes that you take right from their very first steps on to a diploma. Would you please tell me about it?*

126. **A:** I want to have a nest of fledglings. I believe that, if I had badly trained children in advanced classes, I would have got more tired and my toil wouldn't have paid off. On my little ones all my methodology is projected and they are the ones who will either justify it or not.

127. **G. M.:** *What are the criteria of parents or students for choosing a certain conservatory?*

128. **A:** They usually go to the one nearest to their home, because they don't have much time to spare. Because there are a lot of these schools in Athens, some of them very good – all depending on what criteria the director uses to choose his teaching staff – parents end up choosing one nearby.

129. **G. M.:** *Can you tell me the reason why most parents send their children to music schools?*

130. **A:** Although in Greece the prevalent attitude is positive for all other kinds of music except classical, they do enrol them at conservatories. They don't know, of course, what kind of procedure their children are going to be put through. That is, what kind of music they are going to be dealing with. They believe in the purity of music education, because there is a prevalent assumption that children should learn a little bit of ballet, a little bit of a foreign language, a little bit of gymnastics, or a little bit of piano, and the latter is especially regarded as the apex of Greek culture. They have no idea at all how important it is, or how much time and hard work it involves. They are not interested in what standard their children can reach. The majority of parents simply want their children to learn some music. Although they don't really know anything about the usual attendance procedure and music training, I am convinced that no harm could come out of that as regards their children's progress.

131. Attending five- to six-year piano sessions they gain many things, such as getting acquainted with many other areas of knowledge that they have never thought about before. They come into contact with great composers, especially from the Intermediate Level onwards, and a kind of high-quality intellectual work. As they themselves become interpreters and are asked to convey the deeper notions of their pieces, they come into close contact with serious, good-quality music. On top of that, they learn to discipline their minds. Through piano learning they discover how to learn generally: discipline, organising their work, implementation of a certain system and so many other important things. Those are qualities and ways that can be used in other aspects of learning. Finally, I believe they get an overall pleasure from music. All the children who don't get this kind of pleasure drop out. In my opinion, they do just the right thing, because they should try to find something else more suitable instead. The same thing applies to children who find it hard to absorb music work, or children who are not sensitive to music. It is a pity that they should feel oppressed. Most of the ones that drop out do so instinctively because they know that they cannot make any progress. That is, self-esteem comes into play. However, the ones who reach the Intermediate level have definitely experienced a wonderful repertoire, which will mark them out in their educational future. This could become a means of enriching their lives. No matter what standard a student has reached, I believe that having done good work in his piano course is very important. This is the

reason why I insist that a teacher has to do the right work for all the children regardless of whether they want to be professionals or not. On the other hand, a teacher cannot actually guess their exact prospects. Let nature and the child himself choose the course he is going to follow in his studies.

132. **G. M.:** *Now, what's your definition of 'talent' in the piano?*

133. **A:** I would bring it down to earth and, in general terms, I would say that talent is not so significant. A talented child is a sensitive recipient of music. I can tell a talented child at least from the second year of his studies by the way he reacts to whatever he hears about music, how he comprehends it, and how he puts it to use. He becomes sensitive to it, and possesses a freedom of movement or a very good ear for music. It's this learner who can take up music either as an amateur or professional. It's his choice whether he becomes a doctor or a pianist. He might reach the stage of playing some easy pieces of music, depending, of course, at what level he has dropped out, but, whatever the case, he will learn to perform in the best possible way.

134. **G. M.:** *As for technique, do you, by the way, belong to a certain 'school'?*

135. **A:** I have most definitely been influenced by the Russian School since, besides the fact that I studied with teachers of that school, later on I studied a lot of books that confirmed whatever I had already learnt. That's why I keep on teaching Russian repertoire as well, as you might have noticed. In addition I am interested in many other composers from other countries. If on my way I come across some other 'school' that appeals to me better, I might think it over and change. It is a person's body structure that limits the choices, and for me the Russian School at this moment, and as I see it, is the best. The Alexander Technique has also deeply influenced my technique methods. By teaching children, studying books and my endless piano practising, I try hard to become as good a teacher as possible. Teaching the piano without actually playing it is unthinkable for me. Whenever I put on a concert I invite my students to it. I take it as vital for my students as well as for me, since I also learn a lot of things.

136. **G. M.:** *Are there any teachers who played an important part in your way of teaching?*

137. **A:** My first teacher and my tutor in my Master's degree at Warsaw, who performed wonderfully, helped me a lot in technical aspects. The Warsaw teacher paid a lot of attention to the method and to what a student should be taught according to his age, explaining in the process why he did that. A teacher learns to play the piano, I think, by experience. Only when you put this into action and you see it performed by your students, do you have the right to say that you know it. The effectiveness of a teacher's lessons as a whole can be seen quite clearly from the work of the majority of his/her students.

138. **G. M.:** *Regarding your relation to your students I was impressed by the fair way you handled them although they were of a different character and played in a variety of ways.*

139. **A:** I am normally a person of a very positive disposition. I always try hard to take into account all their positive characteristics in music and to intensify them. A teacher has to praise his students. Every time I try to give them the right dose for the right moment. They might need strictness or friendliness, all depending on the child or the time. Learning music is a hard process, and they know that I must be strict but fair. They know that they are going to get 'bravo' whenever it is due to them, and they appreciate it. On the other hand, they themselves know when they play well. I make an effort to adapt myself to the way every child performs. Whenever I get home after work I think hard about whatever I am going to give them for homework next time. I never in any way have any inhibitions about admitting that I made a mistake or asked a person to play a note with the wrong finger. I am not God, after all. Only God is Omnipotent. We are only humans. I want them to know that one should never be categorical. I tell them, 'let's try this finger as well'. In this way, their judgement is developed.

140. **G. M.:** *May I ask you one last question? Have you done any additional courses in piano teaching?*

141. **A:** My piano teacher in Warsaw taught me some additional methodological secrets in private lessons, which improved not only my piano playing, but also my way of teaching. Although I studied at the best conservatory in Athens (the COA), unfortunately, I didn't learn the basic music rules there. My teacher at that

conservatory was herself a great soloist with a natural talent, so there was no reason for her to try to work out any kind of methodology, as she could play the piano so well in an instinctive way. She could, however, be a very gifted teacher for MA students, whereas I needed to learn the basic aspects of piano playing. In my opinion, even a child with very small hands can become a great performer if he is tutored by a suitable person. This is something that has been stressed by many piano pedagogues.

142. **G. M.:** *I think we've talked about everything, haven't we? Thankyou so much for your co-operation.*

143. **A:** Thankyou too, and I wish you all the best with your work.

## 'B'S INTERVIEW

This second interview took place in Athens on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2000, at 9 a.m.

'G.M.' is Georgia Markea (the interviewer). 'B' is a name given to the teacher for reasons of anonymity.

### B1 M-L: SCARLATTI, SONATA, N. 15

1. **G.M.:** *What were you thinking about when you were listening to her?*

2. **B:** I always let the children play from the beginning to the end without commenting on anything, so I can judge what they have so far done. We usually repeat the performance adding whatever we think necessary. What was I thinking? I was thinking that she was performing quite well, but I didn't like her moves. It's a thing that I never approve of; that is the brain works directly on the fingers, they start playing, our brain and our ears getting to work, thinking of the piece we are dealing with. Superfluous movements distract the performance. I am in favour of anything that has to do with the ease of the body, and mostly I am against a person moving along with the rhythm. I definitely don't like it.

3. **G. M.:** *Do you think that there is a way of dealing with it?*



4. **B:** Yes, I think a mirror should be used. It's a thing that I would recommend. That is, we all, whenever we study a new piece, are trapped by the technical difficulties that we come across, and thinking that making a move would help us, we come to a dead end. A mirror, however, beside or on the piano would enable us to keep control over it. There are young people who have many difficulties, besides a lack of self-confidence. So they move about a great deal with every note or phrase. That's not good. It must be learnt. We can see this in most of the great performers. They play with their hands. They don't move about, although it is a 'fashionable tendency' nowadays, but think they can thus express a composer's deeper notions. I think that this should be kept out of the world of Music.
5. **G. M.:** *I thought she was absorbed in the spirit of the whole of the performance and that that was quite good.*
6. **B:** It must have been. It may be that those movements can be attributed to the fact that it was only one of the few times she had done that piece. I can imagine that when she gets to learn it better she will be much cooler. I have seen her not moving so much, but watching the video presentation I noticed that she was actually moving a lot more than I had thought.
7. **G. .M.:** *Would you by any chance believe that the presence of the video camera affected you?*
8. **B:** Not me. I tried to ignore it. I think it does affect the children – even a tape-recorder does. But my attitude didn't change at all.
9. **G. M.:** *Can you tell me something about M-L?*
10. **B:** M-L is a very gifted person and a hard-worker. She works like a dog. You can never find any technical defects in her work. Nothing goes wrong at any given moment with her. As far as music is concerned, however, there is something to be done.
11. **G. M.:** *Was she your student right from the start?*



12. **B:** She has been a student at the ‘Conservatory of Athens’ from the start. She was actually brought up there, musically speaking. She had Mrs ... as a teacher. I then took over from her when she moved on to the advanced level. She’s been my student for the last six years.
13. **G. M.:** *By the way, did you find anything wrong with her playing?*
14. **B:** No. When she came to me she had already played a lot of pieces of music (e.g., many Bach Preludes and Fugues and various studies), something that is unusual for children of her age. She was a well-advanced professional. Other students at advanced levels have hardly played more than four studies, one or two Bach Preludes, for example. She has created the basis for further progress.
15. **G. M.:** *I was impressed by the fact that you played everything you taught.*
16. **B:** Some of the pieces are from my repertoire. But there are a few that I have hardly ever come across. So I just look them through before I have a go at them, so I can see where the difficulties lie, what is intended musically, and how to find ways out of the difficult points when I put it into practice. I always prepare everything I teach. It’s a must.
17. **G. M.:** *Why do you do that? To inspire the student, or just for the sake of the presentation?*
18. **B:** For both of them. For me, because I like playing it at all times, and for a better presentation. I have also noticed that with the pieces I have never played before usually I put a lot of work into them. It’s strange. Once I had a very talented student who adored Prokofiev. One day, he said to me, ‘I would like to play this piece of Prokofiev, but the way you yourself have played it, I am going to mess things up, as I will have to face up to reality’. I asked him ‘why? Quite the contrary. I am going to offer you a directive line and you can carry on’. To cut a long story short, he was persuaded to play it. I was really impressed by his attitude: ‘We can deal with it, if you want to’.
19. **G. M.:** *During the lesson you asked her if she had tape-recorded herself.*
20. **B:** I usually recommend it since it helps them a lot.

21. **G. M.:** *Is it for them to listen to and evaluate their performance?*
22. **B:** That is so, because every one who listens to his voice wonders, 'Is that me?' Just imagine the pianist who thinks that he has achieved something great and discovers that he hasn't stressed the tone at some stage of his performance. Then he can correct it. Quite often learners come to me and I tell them to listen to what they had previously played and soon they realise what they have done wrong.
23. **G. M.:** *I have noticed that, since you've mentioned it quite often.*
24. **B:** Yes, since we have at our disposal such a useful apparatus, we should make use of it.
25. **G. M.:** *You also advise them to sing along with their playing.*
26. **B:** Yes, wherever the expressive parts are imperative.
27. **G. M.:** *Do you regard it as part and parcel of their studies?*
28. **B:** Definitely, because a pianist is in some way in a disadvantageous position, whereas a singer or an instrumentalist such as a violinist or a flautist can control the sound. They can temporarily hold it back and listen to it again. Once a pianist has struck the keyboard, that's the end of it. There is no going back.
29. **G. M.:** *You consider accentuation as one of the most important things in music. I've noticed this a lot more emphatically in the case of Z.*
30. **B:** Yes, she is weak at accenting sounds. I mean, everyone should know where the high tones are placed. It is very important as far as technique is concerned. That is to be able to play as fast as possible. Unfortunately, many students don't learn it in time, so it becomes much more difficult to correct it later on. When you make such a mistake, I am sorry to say, this is not music at all. In a spoken language we accent especially whatever we intend to.
31. **G. M.:** *I noticed that you insist on accenting words on the right vowel, e.g., 'to accEnt'.*
32. **B:** Yes, I'm just giving simple examples. And you just hit the nail on the head!

33. **G. M.:** *Although most of your students are grown ups you still insist on using simple, plain expressions.*
34. **B:** Yes, I try to help them in the way I regard as being as effective as possible for each one of them. Don't forget that most of my students are at Advanced level. This means that they have attended the Intermediate levels while attending at the same time secondary education classes. So they were short of time as regards music and its technique. Besides even their piano teachers find it hard to cope with these problems. Thus we find ourselves at Advanced level in strange or difficult situations. And the piano teachers are forced to face even these little problems in addition to their main duties.
35. **G. M.:** *I just remember once, as we were walking along the corridor, you commenting on a sharp difference in the potential between present and past generations. You favoured past generations.*
36. **B:** It has, of course, changed a lot, but every generation is different. At the beginning of my career, that is round about 1972, my students were very devoted to their music studies. They used to attend many more concerts, love music and gave themselves to it wholeheartedly. Children nowadays have been distracted from music, because of a very heavy school syllabus, the mass media, and the outdoor life, and, unfortunately, music is not usually their cup of tea, is not their top priority. It is very rare for this to happen. This doesn't go for M-L, of course.
37. **G. M.:** *Do you think that M-L is the only one devoted to music?*
38. **B:** Remind me of all the students that you have listened to, please...
39. **G. M.:** *A, M, F, Z, V, L...*
40. **B:** M is a new student. He and F attend University. M is at Polytechnic School, so he cannot spare much time for music, although he is a good musician, loves music and would like to make a career out of it. But his parents in their own way would like him first to get a University degree, since in modern Greek society it counts for much to possess such a degree.

41. **G. M.:** *I just want to point out something about parents. A girl from a suburb on the outskirts of Athens complained that her mother was not prepared to wait to pick her up from the Conservatory, so the girl had to miss a session.*
42. **B:** In Greece, children depend on their parents no matter what their age is. We still have cases where their parents are still supporting them even after many years of reaching maturity. It's not like England where they have initiation at a very early age, even before leaving school. This is not the case with Greeks, yet. We are not real Europeans, I am afraid [she laughs]. You see the girl from the outskirts of Athens is too far out, so she is compelled to rely on her mother's support. It's unfortunate. In music children have to be financed by their parents in purchasing their instrument, which is the piano.
43. **G. M.:** *You must be the exception to the rule, because you have become a successful pianist although deprived of the luxury of possessing a piano.*
44. **B:** In those years I had made the Conservatory my home and place of study. I used to get there at 8 a. m., get the key and retire to a cold deserted classroom. There, I devoted more than five hours every morning to practice.
45. **G. M.:** *Despite all this, however, you successfully reached the top of a music career. Did your parents in any way motivate you towards that?*
46. **B:** On the contrary, my father, although he was keen on music, never felt like pointing me in the direction of music. This is so, because my other four brothers and sisters failed to attain anything important in music, although he had tried hard to make them take up music. All of them played an instrument, but none of them became musicians. They had to do a lot of other things apart from music. When I was at the age when I should have started studying music, my father said, 'you're finished with music. You can do other things such as foreign languages and so on'. Perhaps I was the only one who really liked music. Nobody forced me to do it. It was my choice. Do you get me? The only one who shared my wish was my youngest brother. He told me that if that was what I really wanted to do, I should just do it. My father kept on making objections, as we had lost our money because of the Second World War. He used to repeat again and again 'you have to do something practical, concrete'. My brother, however, said 'you

do it and I will help you'. And he did indeed! In conclusion, you see, you have to have some kind of support to start studying music.

47. **G. M.:** *Would you have any objection if we talked about M-L in relation to her lesson? I noticed that you pay a lot of attention to phrase linkage. You also mentioned that we never play the same phrase three times in the same way.*
48. **B:** On this matter, M-L is not actually concerned with the sound and the structure of the phrase, because she is interested in being true to the notes and getting some reassurance out of it. In this piece of Scarlatti, which she was playing, it is not obvious, but in all the other great romantic pieces we require a great variety of sound and most probably more spiritual devotion. It is a hard task for a child to deal with. She is not to remain aloof, but participate as if she were the singer herself, to put her heart and soul into it, as if she herself had composed the piece. Then she becomes the performer.
49. **G. M.:** *Is it something that can be taught?*
50. **B:** I think so, yes. Often a lot of factors come into it, such as the way of living, personality, how introvert or reserved one is. Music can help even with this to help you change and bring you a little more out of yourself and attempt to vary the sound. We mustn't forget that music, like painting, means colour, light and nuance. All sorts of sounds: obscure, or quite often dazzling, sad or merry, pleasant or depressing. Each and every one should be there, either individually or combined. You have to make a great endeavour to pinpoint them.
51. **G. M.:** *I became aware of your insisting on paying great attention to the pedal. On one occasion, I just saw you moving away and at the same time keeping a vigilant eye on M-L's touch on the pedal.*
52. **B:** I do this not only to have a good look at what's going on, but at the same time I can listen to the piece from a distance. It is quite curious, of course, to see children trying to step on the pedal with those queer kind of trainers, unaware that they are affecting their handling of the pedal. I've always insisted on telling them, 'wear only socks, so that you get the feeling directly in your toes instead of on the sole'. I tell you, last year I had an accident with my right foot and the

doctor advised me to put on shoes with thick soles and ordered me to ‘wear them right through the whole winter, if you want your foot to get well’. Believe me, I couldn’t operate the pedal at all, I couldn’t feel anything when I touched the pedal. So I became convinced once more that I had been right when I had kept on telling them for a long time in the past, that the shoes they wore were quite unsuitable. I went on after that, and told them to wear shoes with a very thin sole, especially when they took an exam.

53. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything further to say with regard to M-L?*
54. **B:** Not much, but only to state that she is an excellent student and has a very good personality.

#### **B2 F: CHOPIN, ETUDE, OPUS 25, N. 12**

55. **G. M.:** *What were you trying to achieve in this excerpt?*
56. **B:** She was pressing hard on the thumb. The thumb is in a very awkward position in this Etude. If it is at the beginning of the study, when you play at a slow tempo you must put the accent on every second note. But even then you shouldn’t press particularly hard on the thumb, but on the second finger. This should be taken care of right from the start, because if one gets used to studying it in that way it will definitely be hard to correct when it gets to its final tempo.
57. **G. M.:** *I remember saying something like this to L, a student from Nafplio. He had studied something the wrong way for a whole week and you abruptly told him ‘you have to study for three weeks more now, to get it right’.*
58. **B:** Of course, you have to forget the mistake and learn what is right, thus losing a lot more time. Some things you have to learn right from the very start, namely note control. One must learn to think of it before one acts. It’s like a civil engineer who knows exactly where to put the supporting columns. You understand what I mean, don’t you? He doesn’t think of it when he has already constructed the top floor. It’s too late then.

59. **G. M.:** *If you put it into musical terms would you say that as this is F's first lesson on this piece, she should look into the quality of sound as well as the right notes?*
60. **B:** I am of the opinion that one must look into everything, not only the notes right from the beginning. This procedure is finished and done with right from the Intermediate class, that is looking at the notes, then the control of sound, and then musicality. Why is that? When we read a passage from the beginning don't we understand its meaning even though we cannot recite it? One must understand it, of course, from the beginning, to get the meaning right from the beginning, and try to cope with all the technical difficulties the piece entails in a slow manner at first, and then at a faster pace, and not be forced to correct the mistakes afterwards. That's a waste of time.
61. **G. M.:** *If F was a little child and was being taught the 'Sly Cat' by Oesten would you ask her to do the same things from her first lesson?*
62. **B:** Of course, I would tell her that, but in a more explanatory way, more suitable to her age. I would also play it for her just for the sake of the sound.
63. **G. M.:** *Regarding the fingers you told her that her fourth one would facilitate her. Is this a regular piece of advice as far as your tutoring goes, or not?*
64. **B:** Yes, I insist on the right fingering.
65. **G. M.:** *You said a lot about it, such as, 'I found these fingers succeed in legato', 'these ones are more flexible', 'the numbers of the fingers I have jotted down on your book are the best for the phrasing', and once you said, 'I don't take any interest in what fingers you use, as long as you play it the way it should be'.*
66. **B:** Naturally, this is so, because the children must be helped. The reason is that they quite often use the strong fingers, for example the thumb, for a weak tone. Since the children are bound to be careless about the use of the thumb, they will strike it without fail. That's why I always try to avoid using the thumb for certain weak tones.



67. Students should think before using their fingers. I advise them, when playing a piece for the first time, to write the numbers of the fingers on the book. I want them in black and white, so we may have to correct them, thus making them think more. It is important that one always uses the same fingers for each different piece of music. There is always the case of finger memory. It happened to me, I tell you, that at one performance I was distracted for a moment, but my fingers kept on functioning perfectly, although my mind was far away. When you have repeated the same thing for so many times with the same procedure you cannot fail. It's a kind of automatism.
68. **G. M.:** *Do you believe that automatism is a prerequisite for someone to perform well with a piece?*
69. **B:** Yes, it is. When your fingers do not help, you do it, since you have still got it in your mind.
70. **G. M.:** *Is it something that can be taught?*
71. **B:** It is something that needs time. The time varies from individual to individual. Repetition, as far as pianists are concerned, is knowledge. We should repeat it time and again, starting from a slow pace and moving to a faster one. Learning by heart helps a lot, I think.
72. **G. M.:** *Does this help in any way to detach oneself from the hard task of focusing your interest on the score, thus, gaining a stricter control over the position of the fingers?*
73. **B:** No, I do believe that a piece of work should be kept well in mind. In that way you get it fixed permanently in your mind. That's why I regard memorising as absolutely necessary.
74. **G. M.:** *Have you got any tips regarding memorising?*
75. **B:** No, I believe that by repeating and studying, I could recite it. Of course, someone can code it; play a phrase many times with one hand or both and then play this phrase and join it with the next one and so on. I think there are no children with such a problem. Only by studying hard is one able to learn it by

heart. In every piece, there are parts, bars and phrases more difficult than others. You must pinpoint them from the start and get to work on them.

76. **G. M.:** *I saw you insisting on a wide range of methods of study such as with closed eyes or standing up...*
77. **B:** 'Standing up' I keep only for children who do not have good hand positions on the keyboard.
78. **G. M.:** *You said it to F, didn't you?*
79. **B:** Of course, I did. F is a new student. She's been with me for only a year and she's playing with a wrist placed rather low. When you stand erect your arm hangs down from the shoulder, so it's obvious what is right. Many children block their strength at the elbow. While you are standing you don't do that. When you are trapped with the elbow still, which I find awkward, as many children who come from Conservatories outside the Conservatory of Athens do, it more or less becomes stiff. The arm should be relaxed right from the top, so that the weight of the hand falls on to the tips of the fingers.
80. **G. M.:** *You have been an executive member of the Board of Directors of many Athens conservatories and know the rules and regulations, so I would like to ask you why M and F, although they had a piano degree from another conservatory, had to go through an exam at the Conservatory of Athens and were relegated to a lower grade since they proved to lack the competency required by that conservatory.*
81. **B:** The Conservatory of Athens is officially recognised by the Ministry of Culture, as far as degrees are concerned, as equivalent to the others – although they are basically of a higher standard when it comes to competency and potential (you must be aware of this, I think). So as the Ministry recognises the degree from the Conservatory of Athens and every other 'Mug's' degree (excuse my French) [she laughs], the Director is compelled to recognise it and place him or her in the second advanced level instead of the fourth one. Then the students, as well as the tutor, are faced with a lot of problems.
82. **G. M.:** *Did you find many shortcomings with M and F?*

83. **B:** Not so many, but there are a lot to be looked into.
84. **G. M.:** *Are you satisfied with their progress?*
85. **B:** They are both good as far as music is concerned, especially F.
86. **G. M.:** *Being a member of many Conservatory committees and having such a wide range of experience of music assessment, could you, in any way, be able to have your say in any other besides the Conservatory of Athens?*
87. **B:** Unfortunately I can't, since the marking is based on the majority of votes. There are five of them, the Director of each Conservatory, the student's tutor, and three outside the Conservatory. Everyone can put his argument forward but cannot influence the other four.
88. **G. M.:** *Could you be a lot stricter whenever there's a need for it?*
89. **B:** I could. I always try to get my way but others might have objections. Most of the conservatories that I usually take part in as a committee member are, in my opinion, quite good, whereas I know a large number of conservatories in Athens which, I am afraid, are not doing what they are supposed to.
90. **G. M.:** *I know quite a lot of cases of graduates of other conservatories being quite competent in their profession. How do you interpret this?*
91. **B:** There are a great number of talented students in Greece. A talented child, even with a bad teacher, will find his way around somehow.
92. **G. M.:** *Do you think on the way the child might try to find a better tutor?*
93. **B:** No, I don't mean that. It's only talent that counts. Nature will find a solution to that, no matter how untalented his tutor is. Of course, a better teacher would have made a difference. So it goes with better schools of music. But I believe that even with unskilled fingers a talented child will do more than what is mediocre.
94. **G. M.:** *As for a child lacking the essential talent for music, what would he achieve?*

95. **B:** With persistence and hard studying he could reach a good stage as long as he possesses a good sense of rhythm. I think that this is very significant. A sense of rhythm is unique and, if you have it, you have it, but if not, nothing can be done about it. In addition to a sense of rhythm he has to be intelligent and follow his tutor's advice. I have met a lot of students who with persistence, hard work and intelligence have succeeded. Intelligence, contact with culture, literature and art, along with some kind of education, will help in piano learning. I am afraid to say so, but there are a lot of young people who never read anything, even from a newspaper or a comic magazine. Those who study at the same time at a university and at a conservatory have to choose one of the two. You cannot serve two masters at the same time.
96. **G. M.:** *What does the word 'study' include –playing the piano or reading a book or looking at the scores?*
97. **B:** Ah, well, I do that. That is, I study the score without at the same time playing the piano. It helps a lot. Richter's tutor, Neuhaus, a great tutor, like many other pianists, writes in his book that one should be in a position, after reading a passage, to play it on the piano. So one must start one's study first in one's mind.
98. **G. M.:** *'To have a clear picture in mind' is something that you repeat from time to time.*
99. **B:** Yes, I do put emphasis on it.
100. **G. M.:** *Would you add anything to the above-mentioned?*
101. **B:** No, let's carry on.

### **B3 M: CHOPIN, ETUDE, OPUS 10, N. 4**

102. **G. M.:** *What was the thing that you tried to correct in this excerpt?*
103. **B:** He has been a new student in my class, for not more than three months. So when you saw him, he had only been with me for two and a half months. Generally speaking, he doesn't pay much attention to his hand and, like most of them, puts pressure on his thumb. This was what I was trying to develop. Making

him relax his thumb and give more strength to the other fingers playing the accented points. Technique is very important. M is endowed with the mind to overcome his problems, although he has been concerned with his Polytechnic school studies. He spends a lot of time there and less time on music. He is a good student and he is keen on music. This Etude is too difficult for him.

104. **G. M.:** *Has he made any progress since I last saw him?*

105. **B:** Yes, he has. He managed to play it at a concert! I had all of my students at my house. I do this every year on the last Sunday before Christmas. They usually play a piece of Bach, an Etude, and the piece they are studying at that time. My older students take the part of the audience. I have had them as such in my house for a number of years.

106. **G. M.:** *What do you expect to get out of it?*

107. **B:** It is to motivate them to study more intensively and as a farewell to the year. So it's the beginning of the studies of the new pieces. Those living overseas look forward to it and most of them are present. This is quite interesting, since the older students get in touch with the new ones and talk about a variety of music subjects, and the new ones get a lot of information regarding music trends and studies abroad. On that day, M performed very well, not fast of course, but I was really pleased since it was very hard for him.

108. **G. M.:** *You said that 'one has not only to think of the piece that one's performing, but the audience have to listen to it'. Now, do you have a special way of training a child to play before an audience?*

109. **B:** The student must be prepared to emphasise certain points in his work, so that the audience can comprehend it. The more prepared one is, the less nervous one can be, and even if one is nervous, one will be able to face up to it. Students tend to feel a kind of fear of missing continuity. For this we have a special detail technique and tell them to work hard on these particular difficult points. But they must not remember them particularly when playing. They should only think of the music. We leave them all behind and think only of the music, and thus avoid getting trapped in those minor details. Study, analysis, and working out of details

mustn't be heard during the performance. Listeners are not interested in how you do it. They only want to listen to the music. On the other hand, we actually play for others, not for ourselves. It's a way of communicating, a very great away of doing that too. When you come to think of it, it dispenses with the difficulties of language. It is international. I think those who are involved in music must be fortunate.

110. **G. M.:** *Is there anything more unusual that it offers us?*

111. **B:** To start with, it disciplines us. A musician cannot be an undisciplined individual. We are keen on reaching a point that would satisfy us and this becomes absolutely personal. It brings great satisfaction. Exactly the same satisfaction as a teacher who really cares about his students gets. What kind of satisfaction is it? I think it is in managing to pass on to the learner what is to be taught and the right way to do it, and seeing the teaching find a way towards fulfilment. This contentment has no equivalent in human feeling.

112. **G. M.:** *That means it's not only about becoming a professional musician.*

113. **B:** No, no. Even if one doesn't become one, one would have a much warmer experience of music than a person who has not had any at all. Isn't that so? Having had some kind of experience and enjoying music, a lot of adults come back and take up again some kind of music course. I have witnessed cases where mothers, having enrolled their children for a music course, after a while have a go at it themselves. It helps the students to see their parents trying to do something that they are doing.

114. **G. M.:** *I would like to ask you something about the importance that you laid on harmonic progression, not only with M but with all the other children. You always told them to be sure where the last note was.*

115. **B:** It's like a full statement in a passage that we have read. Full stop. It goes on and... reaches the end after a number of complete statements. When it comes to music it is not only notes that one is playing that is important, but familiarity with what one's aiming for and knowing how to achieve it. One should know it right from the start, and have thought about all the points and where they lead. Do you

get me? The process must be fixed in your mind and be capable of being put it into practice. This is what we call structure.

116. **G. M.:** *'Think!' you used to say again and again.*
117. **B:** Yes. Isn't it the brain that plays an important role? Of course it does, whether we like it or not.
118. **G. M.:** *I've noticed that you have used in this excerpt, and during the lessons I was fortunate to be present at, a wide range of ways of teaching, such as playing on the piano and then, all of a sudden, taking over as a conductor, or often playing on the piano a piece that a learner played freely and embodying all the mistakes he made...*
119. **B:** Yes, I must admit that sometimes we overdo it. We play very badly on purpose.
120. **G. M.:** *You also sing, you direct the child's hand, you tap out the tune on the piano. Was it intentional?*
121. **B:** No, you don't think of these things. They come automatically at that very moment, since you are looking for a way to help your learner. Being an onlooker, you see a lot. The fact that I was conducting in some way is something that I consider important. Quite often children do not pay attention to the way a piece is written, that is if it is divided into 3/4 or 2/4. I tell them the way that a conductor would direct it. 'Would he do it like this?' (She gesticulates to demonstrate it).
122. **G. M.:** *I've noticed that, although you are strict with children, all of them respect and love you, even when you have pointed out their mistakes. Is it because you are being very fair and encouraging?*
123. **B:** Oh, yes, yes. You must encourage them as much as possible since they easily get disappointed. They have great potential. They can do almost anything, but you have to show them how.

124. **G. M.:** *One last question about M. Although I was quite sure that you had already known that his hand was not as loose as it should be, you let him carry on. Were you being lenient to him, as it was one of his first lessons on this piece?*

125. **B:** Yes, because I believe that in no time his fingers will be in the right condition. I know his fingers are not relaxed yet, and he loses control over them. I couldn't demonstrate it at that time, because the piece was too hard for him. Lately, I have been giving him simple things, telling him to pay a lot of attention to his hands as well. I advise him to let his arms and hands relax. A good sound, you see, comes directly from a relaxed hand. When it is stiffened the quality of sound will be quite harsh. It's a bit early for him. You cannot tell him everything. Another child who also came from another Conservatory, and has been with me for quite a few years, told me, after he had been with me for two years: 'Why did you accept me then?' And I answered 'If I had pointed out all your deficiencies right then you would have walked out'. You have met him in the classroom. It is A. He is in England now and has told me that he has done quite well in his exams. Even so, he is still suffering from stress, which is not good for him. Everyone must, at any given stage of development in his course, be contented with whatever he can do. One listens to a piece of music performed by a professional pianist and exclaims, 'he plays it this way, but I can't'. Yes, but you are yourself, and he is himself. They are two different things. You must play what you can at this very moment. You cannot perform as well as somebody else. You just can't go as far as he can. I know this can cause you insecurity and stress. This is what happened to A.

126. **G. M.:** *Summing up, would you have anything to add?*

127. **B:** No, let's go on to the next excerpt.

#### **B4 M-L: CHOPIN, SONATA, OPUS 35, N. 2, 1<sup>ST</sup> PART, IN B FLAT MINOR**

128. **G. M.:** *What were you trying to achieve?*

129. **B:** I just wanted to see the harmonic progression towards attaining a better structure. I was keen on seeing the quality of sound and the expressiveness.



130. **G. M.:** *You use a large number of words to describe a feeling, don't you?*
131. **B:** Oh, yes, I have to. The child must realise what he has to express, to understand what it means and the reason why it was composed.
132. **G. M.:** *Do you believe that a teacher can teach a student who hasn't assimilated the meaning?*
133. **B:** Of course, working out and interpreting the piece. The children at first are trapped in the technical difficulties of such great pieces, so they miss out on expression or character. It is a tutor's job to introduce them to the piece and get the students to approach it in the right way. Otherwise they may not be able to perform it.
134. **G. M.:** *Is there any particular composer who you believe to be harder to teach?*
135. **B:** For me, the harder a composer is, the better he seems to be: Mozart and Beethoven, for instance.
136. **G. M.:** *You once mentioned that when you play a piece by Mozart in front of an audience you feel as if you are walking naked on the stage.*
137. **B:** I personally regard him as the most difficult composer and he must be a lot more difficult for the young musicians, as they consider him one of the easiest, since his notes and notions are simple. But to perform those simple notions right, that's the hard part of it. You learn the notes and the tune right away, but what happens after that?
138. **G. M.:** *Does it help to know a composer's life?*
139. **B:** Yes, it all helps. An adult can easily mould his ideas, whereas a child finds it quite hard. The easier the piece is, the more difficult it is to perform. Mozart and Beethoven's music must be stored away for quite some time for you to be able to convey their meanings. What I mean is, you can study a Prokofiev Sonata, learn it and play it the very next moment. On the other hand you cannot study Mozart or Beethoven, learn it and play it the next moment. You have to let it remain dormant inside you to mature. Then you have to look at it over and over again.

You'll discover more things and eventually it will become yours. Only then can you give it out for the enjoyment of others as best you can. I sincerely believe this.

140. **G. M.:** *Did M-L make any progress in connection with harmonic progression, notions and expressiveness?*
141. **B:** Yes, she has made some progress although in this excerpt she seems to have difficulties in handling it. She works hard and broods over it. We are talking about a talented child, as for other ordinary children you have to repeat it over and over again if they don't get it at once.
142. **G. M.:** *You insisted on her practising by heart with only her left hand.*
143. **B:** I do this for the sake of memory and just before any presentation to make each hand independent as regards music, technique and sound quality. Even if we have learnt a piece we should be able to play it only with the left hand at its authentic tempo. Because learners usually don't listen to the left hand since music of the left hand is usually an accompaniment.
144. The day before yesterday, a little girl played a very difficult part of Saint-Saens with long intervals between the notes of the left hand, so she was a complete failure. I asked her 'how did you study it? Ah, well, on second thoughts, instead of telling me, play it'. She played it along with the right one. I asked her 'did you study it along with the right one? Is the right one hard?' There were chords, one next to the other. She answered 'no, it's not hard'. 'Then, why did you study it with the right hand? Study the left one first, which is the hard one'. I asked her to study it in front of me but she couldn't manage to do it separately with each hand. The autonomy of each hand was the problem. The right one was just fine. She hadn't observed that she should have studied the left one where the problem actually was. The right hand facilitates the left one by covering up the problem.
145. **G. M.:** *You also put emphasis on pauses. On one occasion you said to her 'a pause has to be expressive'.*
146. **B:** A pause is part of the music. It has to have its proper duration and you have to give it serious consideration, since something has ended, but at the same time

something else has arisen. The composer knows what he is doing when he uses a pause. The student not only has to be careful with the expressiveness of a pause but the movement of the body as well.

147. **G. M.:** *As regards the movement of the body, I wonder why M-L's head movement did not draw your special attention in this excerpt whereas in another case of L you almost reprimanded him.*

148. **B:** If it were Scarlatti or Bach, I would have asked for complete stillness. But it was Chopin. It is a hard piece for a girl. It takes a long time to play, it has long chords and the movement of her head does not affect her performance. Not that the composer requires it, but it is, in a way, excusable in order to be more expressive. Why should one move about when one is performing a piece by Bach when the latter is thoroughly spiritual? The movement should fall on to the tips of the fingers. I abhor movement at any moment when playing a Bach piece. A movement in this case changes the composer's character.

149. **G. M.:** *Once you told her that she should have played that piece of Bach as if on a harpsichord not a piano.*

150. **B:** We are eager to know what the instrument was like at that time.

151. **G. M.:** *However, I've noticed that you suggested that she should use the pedal when performing a piece of Bach, whereas when I was a student at the Conservatory of Athens they even prohibited the use of it.*

152. **B:** We revised our view of the whole matter, because we thought it was a mistake to imitate another instrument when we play on the piano. Since the main functions of a harpsichord have been transferred to a piano, why shouldn't we have a pedal when we really do need it? For example, some tempi that are recommended by some editions are not the ones that Bach would be happy about. Gould has changed Bach in a way that I personally like, but I wouldn't recommend him to my students. He's got his own peculiar way of expressing Bach. For his own sake you accept him, but Bach is really deformed if played by anyone else trying to imitate Gould.

153. Once one of my students was performing a Bach piece out of rhythm. I asked her 'you have listened to Gould, haven't you?' She answered 'yes'. I told her 'forget him now'. Gould made so many esoteric differentiations, but the final product kept a favourable flavour at first hearing. She couldn't convince anyone. She had only kept the bad parts of rhythm. So we must listen to records but not copy them when it comes to performing. Richter was a great master. He played Bach in a traditional way.
154. **G. M.:** *I've noticed that you kept your students performing exactly what the score demanded. There was not the slightest deviation. You said to M-L pointing to the score 'that was what Chopin wanted'.*
155. **B:** We are always careful with the edition that we buy and afterwards we stick to it. When Chopin says 'use this particular finger', you just obey.
156. **G. M.** *In scales you insisted on the fingers having the same force.*
157. **B:** As equal in strength as possible. Students must be careful with their thumbs especially with scales.
158. **G. M.:** *Anyway, you have always been teaching scales, even to M and F, although they have got a degree from another Conservatory.*
159. **B:** Yes, since they haven't been properly taught, that is they haven't played all the kinds of scales. So I must do that, because I regard them as a must, although they are not going to be tested on it. I also like an exercise of my tutor for octaves and I like them to get acquainted with it.
160. **G. M.:** *Has your teacher affected you in the art of teaching? You've still got his photo on the piano.*
161. **B:** Yes, but he is not the only one, since I have had quite a number of teachers and I always get something out of each of them, and have eventually created my own school of music. Generally, when you have taught for so many years you gradually end up creating your own way of thinking and teaching what we commonly call 'a school'.

162. **G. M.:** *In your tutoring do you adopt a certain 'school'?*

163. **B:** I studied in Germany, but I believe that the best schools must be in Russia. There they have the best musicians by far. You take Richter for instance. Music and dance flourished in the former Soviet Union. These are the two arts that have nothing to do with politics, unlike writing a book. You have to deal with the way of living and living conditions in that. A musician and a dancer are free spirits, devoting themselves only to their art, and thus creating great schools. They still keep up the tradition.

164. **G. M.:** *Shall we talk about something else?*

165. **B:** No, let's have a cup of tea.

**B5 M: BACH, FUGUE FROM 'THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER', VOL. 2, IN B MINOR**

166. **G. M.:** *What were you trying to achieve in this excerpt?*

167. **B:** It was one of the earliest lessons, so I wanted the theme to come out living apart from every other detail. In a fugue the performer and the listener should clearly distinguish the theme itself. That's what polyphony is about. That doesn't mean that all the other voices should not participate in the whole performance, because we must take it as three different instruments, each of which has to play a certain role. At first, I always put the stress on the theme, so the pianist should recognise it right away, and bear it in mind. At this stage I told him that each bar in this piece is divided into three, so there is only one note that must be accented. This is important for the harmonic progression as well as the sense of rhythm.

168. **G. M.:** *You played on the piano with your left hand sitting next to him. Did you do that for any particular reason?*

169. **B:** I don't, as most teachers do, play with my right hand. I use the other hand to see if he can listen to it without getting confused. You see, M didn't. But, usually, if you do this to someone else playing a lower voice s/he will give up. As far as Bach is concerned I always insist that they should play voice after voice, or

two voices together (the one forte and the second piano or vice versa), in order to recognise them. I also ask them to play the two voices by assigning them to both hands. I do this to make them distinguish the two voices, because if they get used to playing them with both hands it would be absolutely wrong. I also ask them to play the lower voice piano on the right hand and the higher voice forte on the left hand.

170. **G. M.:** *You even asked him to sing, didn't you?*

171. **B:** Yes, after we have studied everything I mentioned previously and have learnt the fugue as it stands, we always sing a different voice. In doing this we find some difficulties in the intermediate voices, which are usually given to both hands.

172. **G. M.:** *It seems that he likes Bach a lot, doesn't he?*

173. **B:** Yes, he does indeed. He usually chooses a piece of Bach in advance and he says to me 'I like it. Shall I play it?'

174. **G. M.:** *Do you believe that, if he didn't like it, you would make him like it?*

175. **B:** I use a variety of methods in helping him to pick it out, such as playing it myself (if I don't know it, I study it at home), or telling him about the reason why the piece was composed. Whenever he does really like the piece, it makes it easy for me to teach. Children, of course, who usually come to study at the Conservatory of Athens, are particularly fond of classical music and there is no need for me to make them love it. They also know that some pieces are compulsory for certain exams, so I don't have to talk about it.

176. **G. M.:** *Since I last saw him, has he made any progress?*

177. **B:** He played Bach and Chopin at the meeting I had arranged at my home. Although he has improved a lot, there are still some more things to be looked into. As time goes by, he'll get to know a lot more about music. He is familiar with music at a good level and that's hopeful for the future.

178. **G. M.:** *Do you have any further comments to make on this excerpt or on M?*

179. **B:** No, I think I have already said a lot, but I just want to say that he'll do a lot with music despite the fact that he is over occupied.

**B6 A: BACH, PRELUDE FROM 'THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER', VOL. 2, IN A-FLAT MAJOR**

180. **G. M.:** *What was it that displeased you in this excerpt?*

181. **B:** It annoyed me that he had lost his balance in the demisemiquaver rhythm. His hands were not well balanced, simultaneously that is. Despite the fact that he knows that his left hand should play the accented note, he never does that, so the demisemiquavers are not in rhythm. All the way through this Prelude the problem was always present. It is an out-of-rhythm way of doing this. That's why I was so upset, since I have many a time stressed the necessity of it. But it keeps on coming up again and again every time I teach it.

182. A has been playing wrongly for a long time and it seems very hard for him to get out of it. We should overcome all the difficulties that he is faced with. He should take it as a personal victory, if he manages to do it. I think we should actually be stubborn and persistent. 'Where there is a will, there is a way', I always say.

183. **G.M.:** *Has he made any progress since I last saw him?*

184. **B:** Of course he has. Yesterday he played this piece at the exams in England, and right away after the exam he contacted me and told me that he had done quite well. I hope he did.

185. **G. M.:** *As for the placing of his hands on the piano, you said that he should keep his hand in a semi-circular shape, especially with any piece of Bach.*

186. **B:** Yes, this needs a relaxed hand, and sideways movements should be restrained without moving the wrist upwards or downwards. This would alter the sound. Here we need a relaxed one.

187. **G. M.:** *Could the palm, in any way, be placed over the keyboard in a stretched out way instead of forming the semi-circular shape?*

188. **B:** Of course, quite often our hand cannot play all the composers in the same way. You see, Bach does not require long spaces between the notes, so the fingers are a lot closer together. Brahms, on the contrary, due to his variety of chords and the distances between the notes, needs the use of the shoulder, a lot of arm looseness and fingers stretched out like a peacock tail. Whenever it comes to the notes that are similar to Bach, a semi-circular-shaped palm is recommended.
189. **G. M.:** *For a short-fingered learner, how would you advise him?*
190. **B:** I have never had such a learner, but I know Japanese pianists who are quite skilful on the piano. They can play a much harder piece due to their quick wits. I think that it is only natural for them. I used to watch Japanese people either on television or during my studies perform quite well, although their previous generation was a lot shorter than the present-day one. I think that there is a chance for short-fingered people to become great pianists. What is important is the sideways stretching of the fingers, what I previously called ‘the peacock tail’.
191. **G. M.:** *Are there any ways of getting them shaped that way?*
192. **B:** I think if a child starts playing the piano at an early age, fingers gradually tend to stretch out a lot easier by themselves. For example, Mrs. Herogeorgou had had her fingers worked on hard since her childhood. Outstretched fingers quite often seem to be a lot bigger. Even the semi-circular position of the palm doesn’t mean that you can play with the tips of your fingernails.
193. The natural position of the hands should be the same as that of a man walking. I think that hands are a very personal matter, as everyone is endowed with his own authentic way. He must adapt his demands to the characteristics of his hands.
194. **G. M.:** *Are you of the opinion that anyone can learn the piano regardless of the size of one’s hands?*
195. **B:** Yes, unless one has defective hands. A short hand needs flexibility and wit behind it that’s all.
196. **G. M.:** *What do you mean by ‘defective’?*



197. **B:** Once I met a learner who had a long thumb and she shortened it by sucking it. This girl couldn't reach an octave after that. When we say that you can play the piano with a short hand, we mean you can, at least, reach an octave. Otherwise, we can patch up things by using other methods such as using two hands, instead of one, to play widely separated notes.

198. **G. M.:** *Would you like to comment on any points mentioned so far in A's case?*

199. **B:** No, let's carry on, shall we?

#### **B7 Z: BRAHMS, OPUS 118**

200. **G. M.:** *What are you trying to achieve with this excerpt?*

201. **B:** I am interested in helping her to play the piece with the character suited to the occasion. It sounds like sorrowful sobbing. Unfortunately she spoils it by using the wrong accent. There is also an excellent melody, and that should not be left out because of the accompaniment.

202. **G. M.:** *I heard you telling her that 'this Intermezzo is one of the best moments in Brahms'. How can a teacher inspire his student to appreciate a piece of music?*

203. **B:** We talk about the pieces before I ask them to study them. This piece of Brahms was the one that Z was particularly fond of.

204. **G. M.:** *That's quite obvious.*

205. **B:** Of course, it is. Well, looking back at your previous question, if anyone can inspire another person, I want to claim that a tutor can, if he spends some time on praising that person. I am convinced that a learner has to be keen on it, otherwise he might have a negative attitude, and end up with failure.

206. **G. M.:** *You mean his failure will be in his study or in his performance?*

207. **B:** In his study. Sometimes a number of children choose pieces a lot more difficult than they are able to cope with. There the teacher has to insist, because if he doesn't, the student is the one to lose. We have to compromise. The teacher

must explain and encourage him, because we all have different kinds of temperament. 'One man's meat is another man's poison', they say, don't they?

208. **G. M.:** *Has it ever occurred to you that a compulsory piece must be disliked by a student and you might have to try to persuade him to do it?*
209. **B:** Yes, it has many times, because at all levels (advanced, intermediate, diploma or degree) there is always one compulsory piece for candidates to play. So we have to try hard to make them like it. We have to put in a lot of constructive work such as playing it on CDs, or the teacher himself showing it on the piano, or giving oral explanations.
210. **G. M.:** *Do you think you help them at all by playing without any score? By the way, in this excerpt, I noticed Z imitating your hand position while you were playing by tapping out the tune on the top of the piano.*
211. **B:** Seeing it being played helps them a lot, after having heard it on a CD. I often urge them to attend concerts, although they don't take it so seriously. I remember, when I was a student, my generation then, although we were very short of money, would attend most concerts. It is one thing to listen to music and another thing to see someone performing it live. No matter what your attitude towards positioning is, or what the size of your hands is, or what sex you are, you acquire some good points. For instance, the way a person withdraws the hand from the keyboard, or how he plays the chords. For this reason I always try to play all the prescribed pieces, because I consider it important for them to see me performing. Because some of them are new to me, I have to study them at home. I have, however, taught a great number of them and in doing so I've learnt them.
212. **G. M.:** *What are your criteria in choosing your repertoire?*
213. **B:** It all depends on what the children like. I have, however, a certain schedule for each student. I jot down what each child has studied during the academic year, what he has played for the exams, and what at the concerts. Then the following year I keep a check on it. That is, if he has played Schumann, for instance, now he must play Prokofiev in order to cover all the periods: the romantic, the modern and so on. It is obvious that he had to have played Bach

and Beethoven, as they are compulsory, to have got an idea of impressionism, and finally to have played a concert. In short, to have a great variety of the basic knowledge since he can play a large number of pieces each year.

214. **G. M.:** *I thought you had an elaborate schedule, since your children have a go at not only some hard pieces, but at a wide range of composers or exercises and scales, as well.*

215. **B:** I try to cover their weak points. Children who come from other music schools or conservatories are not familiar with scales, so I have to do them even then, because classical music embodies scales or arpeggios. They are a necessity for our technique.

216. **G. M.:** *You've also introduced a variety of ways of studying, haven't you?*

217. **B:** Oh yes, that's true. I ask them not only to study the hard points, but to demonstrate them to me on the piano. Because it's always the case that ninety nine per cent of them have been doing the wrong thing.

218. **G. M.:** *And another thing is that they jot your suggestions down. I actually saw them doing it at the end of each session.*

219. **B:** Yes, they do that, because they only have a lesson once a week and God knows what will happen within a week! They may forget my suggestions. Anything written is there to be read.

220. **G. M.:** *Has Z been your student since the beginning of her course?*

221. **B:** Z has suffered a lot of misfortunes. She started at a Conservatory in a small town a few kilometres away from Athens, and later at another small Conservatory, but at the intermediate level she came to the Conservatory of Athens and had Mrs. K. as her teacher. She was a very good student. She passed the entrance exams and entered the advanced level with Distinction. After that she came to me, and has been with me for five years. Her hands, I'd say, are a bit weak. It's better than having hard ones, of course, but she must strengthen them and keep her wrist in a position parallel with the keyboard.

222. **G. M.:** *You got upset when she accented the wrong note. Am I right?*
223. **B:** Yes, you're absolutely right. I have often pointed this out to her; she can't improve it, and might be addicted to it. She seems to have got stuck on it since the beginning of her course.
224. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to say on this excerpt?*
225. **B:** No, I think that's enough for now.

#### GENERAL QUESTIONS

226. **G. M.:** *You've talked about everything running smoothly at the Conservatory of Athens in comparison to the other Athenian Conservatories. I would like to know, however, if you find anything negative about it.*
227. **B:** In the search for perfection you might lose your spontaneity and enthusiasm. I think that strictness, love for the children, and understanding should go hand in hand. Be strict, but at the same time fair, as a teacher.
228. **G. M.:** *I've noticed in a certain way you managed to do this. They respect and love you. Quite often I saw you attending several instrumental sessions together.*
229. **B:** Yes, we do that. We form a group in order to see other instruments in use, since, although the children are always within reach of them, they rarely have the chance to come into close contact. We went to Mr. M's. and Mr. A's. sessions and enjoyed a different kind of instrumental music. They both explained to us how instruments such as the violin, drums, harp and so on produce particular sounds. We ask them a few questions and they willingly answer them. It is a different and more difficult way of producing sounds.
230. **G. M.:** *At one point you ask one learner to play as if she was playing the violin.*
231. **B:** Yes, I did that because I am convinced that the piano actually replaces a whole orchestra. At that moment she had to substitute it for the violin.

232. **G. M.:** *I also wonder why your students, along with their books, had a metronome. Is it a very important piece of apparatus in your work?*
233. **B:** Yes, but not to a great extent. In some way time plays an important part in studying. We use it for reasons of improving technique, and to keep time disciplined. In cases like etudes it is absolutely necessary, but let me say that in the case of Brahms that isn't so. Even for him where there are parts with wide ritenuato, there are parts where timing is absolutely necessary.
234. **G. M.:** *Do you have any other professional secrets, I mean any way of getting round problems in playing the piano?*
235. **B:** Not really. Every student has to be treated in his own special way, and what's good for one might not be so for another. The presence of a metronome somehow always helps one in studying.
236. **G. M.:** *How would you paint the portrait of the ideal piano tutor?*
237. **B:** Besides his musical knowledge it is a prerequisite that he be familiar with psychology or pedagogy. He must also be fond of children. That's my ideal piano teacher. In addition, he has to prepare himself at home. There are professionals in our occupation who, although being very competent, lack methodology and ability to pass their knowledge on to their pupils. It is really a pity. To play well is important, but to play and demonstrate the way is equally necessary for little children and teenagers. I can say that it is far more important for the little ones. There are occasions when I have to seek advice on certain matters but I was disappointed to find that, although they were very successful professionally, they were bad as pedagogues. This is so, because they lack the ability to transmit knowledge. You may ask, what is this ability? Well, it is the way to get close to the learner and eventually into his mind. That is why he's unable or slow to grasp it, and it lies with you to find a solution to it. Returning home after a session, the teacher has to turn over and over in his mind whatever seems to have gone wrong with the lesson. I do this quite often. Take A's case. Many a night, I just lie awake in my bed thinking all the time and trying to find the reasons why he isn't doing as well as he is capable of.

238. **G. M.:** *On one occasion I stood thoughtfully admiring your way of admitting right on the dot any minor mistakes you actually made and, what's more, in front of the children. For instance, you removed the pedal that you yourself had already put on in your previous lesson.*
239. **B:** You're right. Something that seems suitable for you might not be so for someone else. You get it?
240. **G. M.:** *Has your technique been changed in any way?*
241. **B:** Everything changes and teaching changes you a lot. What I mean is, you learn a lot more, much more from your students. An old colleague of mine used to say 'students shouldn't actually pay us. *We* should do that since we learn everyday from them'. A long time ago, when I was young, that is, I had a very wise old friend. She was the Director of the French Institute in Crete and what impressed me was that, despite the fact that she was Greek, she spoke the French language so well that she became a Director. I asked her once 'did you speak French so well when you started?' and she said 'No, when I started I didn't speak any French at all. I began learning when I started teaching'. That dumbfounded me and her words came back to me when I myself started teaching. It's all right. You can perform perfectly but when it comes to teaching, methodology should come into it too. A lifetime experience is also helpful in improving your performances.
242. **G. M.:** *How would you describe a good performance?*
243. **B:** Anything that fulfils my inner world, anything that makes me interested, anything that moves me deeply inside, because we can never be totally elated in enjoying any piece of music that reaches perfection. Even if one does perform close to perfection, but it does not give you any of the above-mentioned feelings, it only satisfies part of your aspirations. I recently had a student who wasn't so industrious and had a lot of deficiencies in her piano studies; she was, however, talented. In her diploma exams, although she was not perfect in whatever she played, she managed to move the audience and the examiners. She produced very lovely sounds and phrases. Ultimately, people are not keen on perfection in notes. They look for musicality. It's wonderful to be perfect, but, if we had to

choose between perfection and musicality, we would choose the latter. It provides us with subtle insight, emotion and pleasure.

244. **G. M.:** *Does inborn sight-reading ability help in any way in piano learning?*

245. **B:** It does, I think.

246. **G. M.:** *If this is not instinctive, do you think that it can be taught?*

247. **B:** Yes, it definitely can. You can practise on whatever you can lay your hands on. If students play a wide variety of pieces, that contributes towards betterment. Even the teacher himself can improve his sight-reading by playing his students' pieces.

248. **G. M.:** *In conclusion, I have nothing else to ask you. I wholeheartedly thank you and wish you all the best in whatever you pursue.*

249. **B:** I wish the same to you and every success with your thesis.

## 'C''S INTERVIEW

This third interview took place in Athens. 'G.M.' is Georgia Markea (the interviewer). 'C' is a name given to the teacher for reasons of anonymity.

### C 1 M: BEETHOVEN, SONATA, OPUS 110, ADAGIO MA NON TROPPO

1. **G. M.:** *What were you trying to get out of this excerpt?*

2. **C:** I was worried about where she was leading the phrase.

3. **G. M.:** *I noticed during the lessons where I was lucky to be present that you paid a lot of attention to how phrases should be joined together.*

4. **C:** From what I know, and from what I have heard from most piano teachers, this is the main problem. It's not the problem of piano technique. There are a lot of people with a very good technique. The problem is to be found where they don't play music in the way in which we speak a language. That is, like a passage with a beginning, a middle and an end; strengthening or lowering intensity, and so on.

5. **G. M.:** *Is singing during the lesson something that you do for any particular reason or are you carried away by the charm of the music?*
6. **C:** To be honest, I like singing. I do this, however, because with singing it is a lot clearer how I would like someone to play a piece of music musically. It is true that students are affected by a song. On the other hand, it is a lot easier to say something by singing rather than using the words.
7. **G. M.:** *You do that to inspire them, don't you?*
8. **C:** Yes, that's so. The teacher, in his attempt to clarify things, ends up achieving this. These pieces are important and it's easy to get a student carried away alongside a teacher. Nobody ever sings with that in mind. As I see myself on the video, I realise that someone could have taken my attitude for putting on an act, since I am aware that I am being video-recorded. This is not so. I always teach like that. Even worse... [she laughs].
9. **G. M.:** *I imagine the same thing goes for you conducting as if you were a real orchestra conductor, doesn't it?*
10. **C:** I do that to interpret the rhythm. Once again I must admit that occasionally I am carried away by the music. At other times, I tap rhythmically on the student's shoulder (you might have noticed that), because someone feels rhythm through his body. Quite often all that comes out quite spontaneously on my own part.
11. **G. M.:** *Has M made any improvements since I last saw her?*
12. **C:** She sat for an exam, but she showed 'gaps' in memory and made a lot of pauses. She was too nervous. It was a bad day right from the start for her. She rang me to say that she couldn't come to the conservatory and complained about her memory. I gave her pieces of chocolate. She didn't want to play.
13. **G. M.:** *How do you go about dealing with children's nervousness?*
14. **C:** Sugar and chocolate are the solutions at the very last moment. Their nervousness, however, springs from their awareness that they haven't prepared themselves well. The one who performs regularly is a lot less nervous than the one who does it for the



first time. In the end everyone is nervous. Anyone who advises students not to be afraid does them a bad service. The main thing for a person is to have thoroughly studied and got acquainted with the pieces of music, so that, whether he is nervous or not, he should be able to present them. I am aware of how nervousness is looked upon, but the more we refer to it the more we remind the children of it, especially the little ones. I once had a student who had come from another teacher. He was going to perform at a concert and he talked a lot about nervousness. He repeatedly said, ‘oh, what am I going to do?’ and I said to him, ‘don’t try to scare off all the children, because we cannot stand any hysterical attitudes’, and finally he stopped it. So he went on and performed very well.

15. **G. M.:** *How would you describe a good performance?*

16. **C:** What is most important is to learn to control our hands. In other words, if we want to play in a low tone, to do that. If we want to do a diminuendo, we just do that. We should know which voice has a diminuendo and which one a crescendo, and then be able to control it; to control our hands, the pedal, the quality of sound and whatever goes with the performance; to be able to follow the notes in the score and whatever is written in it, since this is what is demanded. We never change a piece, as we don’t change the words in an acting role. The main issue is for the children to learn to study and decide for themselves how a piece should be played. Music is not what everyone likes to play, but how the composer would like the piece to be played. A pianist should do, at least, whatever is written in the score. We usually say ‘scores have everything written in them’, but on the other hand, that’s not enough. Especially for classical music, as well as for romantic music up to the end of the last century, it is simple to see where something begins and ends. That is the harmonic progression. It is a must to see that first, and the rest will follow as time goes on. We have, however, to make the students independent of anyone who points out ‘this begins here, this phrase ends here, here is the first unit’ and so on.

17. **G. M.:** *Was M your own student right from the beginning of her studies?*

18. **C:** No, she was my mother’s student, but even before that she had other teachers at the same conservatory.

19. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything else to say about M or about this particular excerpt?*

20. **C:** No, let's go on.

**C2 D: BRAHMS, CONCERTO N. 1, OPUS 15, RONDO, ALLEGRO MA NON TROPPO, IN D MINOR**

21. **G. M.:** *Here I can see you playing the part of orchestra on the other piano, because it is a concerto. You generally play the pieces the students have to study. Would the fact that you have made a career as a piano soloist help you in your teaching?*

22. **C:** Of course it would. It is necessary to be a good pianist in the teaching of the piano, because you have to demonstrate the pieces that they have to study. How are they going to perform if you yourself don't? I don't mean that you have to have an international career, but once or twice in your life you should have played before an audience to see what it is like. To know how it feels to be on stage. It might be that you haven't had any experience with the piece you are going to teach. In this particular case, I played this concerto for my diploma. Finally, whether I know it or not, I end up learning their pieces.

23. **G. M.:** *Do you study the pieces that you are to teach at home so that you are well prepared?*

24. **C:** No, because the pieces that the students of advanced classes play I have either played myself or have listened to many times. If I haven't, I learn them with the children. I follow the score during the lesson and it is as if I am studying it myself. That is, I am sorry to say, I learn it by making use of them.

25. **G. M.:** *D and M just a while ago, seemed to enjoy playing their pieces. Do you think this is something that can be taught? I mean, for anyone to be passionately and wholeheartedly devoted to music.*

26. **C:** I don't think that can be taught. What can be taught, however, is how a very introvert person can play in an extrovert way since he might have given the impression that he doesn't participate in whatever he does. A teacher, even after a

long time, may be able to make a student an extrovert at the time of performing. It is hard, though, to change someone's character, and although he is generally 'cold', make him devote himself passionately for five minutes to what he is performing before an audience. I think that these two particular children like music very much, and we don't have such a problem.

27. **G. M.:** *When you choose a piece do you take into account their preferences?*

28. **C:** Here, I do something that some people regard as wrong, and they may be right. When we choose a piece that they are going to play for their diploma examination and they will be studying for a long time, mostly for two years, then it must be something of their choice. Otherwise they won't feel like studying it. So in such cases we talk about it. I recommend some pieces and they make their own choice. Most of the time we agree. If we don't then it is usually the case of 'the boss is always right' [she laughs]. If a child, for instance, comes and says to me 'madam, I've heard this piece and I'd like to play it', I don't say 'no', unless he is two years old. I believe that children should possess imagination. Of course, I wouldn't agree with them playing something irrelevant to the music I teach.

29. **G. M.:** *What would you say would be the motivation for D, and generally all the children coming to learn music?*

30. **C:** I believe that there is an aura of seriousness in the 'Conservatory of Athens', whereas such a thing doesn't seem to be so in all the others. Besides, there are good tutors in the 'Conservatory of Athens'.

31. **G. M.:** *Is this how the 'Conservatory of Athens' differs from the others?*

32. **C:** I believe that the 'Conservatory of Athens' creates stress in you. For me, it creates the feeling that the students as well as those above me expect a great deal. So I have the feeling that I have to try hard to cope with what is expected from me. I believe that my colleagues and my students feel the same pressure on them.

33. **G. M.:** *How would you interpret the fact that there are a lot of good pianists graduating from other conservatories?*

34. **C:** I believe that talented students can be found anywhere as well as good teachers. It is certain, that the ‘Conservatory of Athens’ does really possess a kind of seriousness to be found nowhere else. Even if you lived on the top of an isolated mountain with an old piano, but you were talented and had a good teacher, you would become a good pianist.
35. **G. M.:** *Going back to one of my questions on the reasons why most children like to learn music, do you believe that there are different motives for the children who prefer the ‘Conservatory of Athens’ and for all the others who attend various other conservatories?*
36. **C:** Well, the small child who is led by his father to enrol in a conservatory does not really know why he does that. The children, however, who decide to come to the ‘Conservatory of Athens’ from other conservatories, although they have sometimes graduated, are absolutely dumbfounded at the fact that they find such a vast difference between the ‘Conservatory of Athens’ and all the others. At first, they are really shocked by the general state of things with all that pressure, with compulsory concerts during the school year, compulsory courses on chamber music, the gradual learning of scales, and so many other musts. They are under continuous pressure. Whether this is good or not, is another matter. It all depends on how one looks at it.
37. **G. M.:** *Regarding D I would like to ask you what you would like him to achieve in the following five years?*
38. **C:** I have to tell you that D has graduated from the Polytechnic School and wants to do a post-graduate course in USA. That is, he is not a person who wants to become a pianist. If D, who is an extraordinary person and has got a deep sense of music, learns to express himself in the ‘right’ way (I have to put that in inverted commas), we will both be contented. I am interested in expressiveness above all. You might ask, ‘aren’t you interested in technique as well?’ At first, it is impossible to express yourself if you don’t have a good technique, whatever we call ‘technique’, to be able to control yourself, the piano or your hands. So I regard technique as a prerequisite.
39. **G. M.:** *For a person to improve his technique, do you have any methodological secrets besides the metronome, the slow practice and so on?*

40. **C:** For a person to do this, Gevaert, as you may remember, used to say that to read Bach's fugues is very important because every finger must play another voice, and so you learn to keep good control over your fingers. I don't have any specific exercises for the technique. Slow practice, for example, is not a specific study, but it becomes one because you simply cannot play the piece at a fast pace, since you still don't know it. If a person is given a new piece, no matter how difficult or easy, it is like the first step one takes when learning to dance. One starts slowly and as time goes by the pianist's hands or the dancer's feet gather speed. It's not a matter of repetition, but the faster you think, the faster you play. Of course, a person must know what he is playing. Everything is to be correct and performed on time. You definitely study the hardest parts a lot harder, and at the same time keep by your side a metronome, timing yourself and progressing from very slow to very fast.
41. **G. M.:** *I ask you this because one view is that one should study music itself and then technique will follow as a result.*
42. **C:** I have met people who play the piano as if they were doing gym exercises. I find this not due to their having studied a lot of technique, but generally their attitude towards music itself. If they see it from the point of view of how fast they can play the piece, they won't convey the meaning they intended. If they look at it from their own point of view and pay no attention to the audience, they will give a different meaning to it. It all depends on how the pianist takes the piece and what he wants to convey and the way he plays it. That's not bad after all. But it is bad for a teacher to teach a child to be fonder of Czerny than Mozart.
43. **G. M.:** *Do you regard the scales as a prerequisite in piano studies?*
44. **C:** Scales are absolutely necessary because I believe that with them you improve your technique: you learn to handle the keyboard and you get familiar with the notes of the pieces since they embody scales. Scales are a must in learning the piano.
45. **G. M.:** *Is learning scales, in the other conservatory where you teach, compulsory as well?*
46. **C:** Well, in the other conservatory the situation is different. There I have a number of students who play much easier pieces, and we take a lot more time studying the

very same thing, because the piano is not their main occupation. They also work somewhere else. They are not like the children we have in the ‘Conservatory of Athens’. I cannot ask them to be as good as all the others. Besides, I still have some doubts. Other teachers may have students of varying potential. My own students are different at the two Conservatories I work for.

47. **G. M.:** *You are of the opinion that for the children who don't regard piano playing as a profession, it still has something to offer them, aren't you?*

48. **C:** Yes, because they understand and love music very much. They simply need a lot more time (a full academic year) to learn one piece. They study for only half an hour every two weeks as they cannot do otherwise, since the piano is their second or third choice of professional employment. I think, however, that these people owe it to themselves to learn the piano.

49. **G. M.:** *What would you say is the reason why students choose to study the piano?*

50. **C:** First of all, I believe that a person wants to study music because he has got some kind of talent. There is no way that he could be untalented. Unless we regard Sgouros [a famous and gifted Greek pianist] as the only talented person in Greece. For me, talent is something that cannot easily be defined. For me, D and M are talented. V, as well as little R are talented too. Every one of them is different when it comes to comparing them. The first fundamental characteristic of a talented person is that he is aware even instinctively of what he is playing. He realises, what I mentioned a short while ago, that music is like a language. On top of that, it is important that one be able to use one's hands properly. If you are playing in front of an audience, you should have a good posture. There are children who do possess such an ability on the stage without actually performing well. These very same children, when they have an audience, play a lot more impressively than during their music sessions. I suppose talents are as many as the number of people who live on Earth. That's how I see things.

51. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to add to all this?*

52. **C:** No, let's carry on.

### C3 R: BACH, MARCH CON BRIO, IN D MAJOR

53. **G. M.:** *In this excerpt, I noticed that you emphasised particularly the phrases and the way they are connected. In your explanatory way I understood how much you are interested in someone performing a piece, as if he was reciting a passage.*
54. **C:** I am really interested in that. Now that I see the video-recording I notice that I should have insisted a lot more on the rhythm in the left hand being much clearer even when it doesn't play the melody since in Bach the left hand often plays the melody. I should have told her that at this age even the left hand can play an important role, so quite often it plays a lot louder for us to listen to the melody. I told her all this at a time when you weren't present. R, however, when she learns the notes can do the phrases herself. This piece was complicated and hard for R. Nowadays she is studying much easier pieces than the one in this excerpt since she is not required to play anything so difficult in her exams.
55. At first, she plays her pieces without paying much attention to the piece but when I say 'R, don't play that so harshly', she corrects the phrases right away. That's what I call 'talent'. Although R is a very small child she reads and learns by heart, not automatically, but what I mean is that when she forgets the notes on the keyboard she can at a glance find them in the score. Most little children usually have a very bad relationship with the score.
56. **G. M.:** *I noticed when you were teaching her you were particularly explanatory giving her fully described pictures.*
57. **C:** Yes, because it is one thing to address a little child, and quite another to address a teenager. After junior lessons, we even used to play hide-and-seek or other games.
58. **G. M.:** *I noticed that you have a very comfortable relationship with your students. I was impressed by the fact that while with some children you looked as if you were of the same age, at the same time they showed a deep respect, and I mean a really deep respect.*
59. **C:** There is nothing to complain about and, to tell you the truth, my students' results were excellent. We work as a team.

60. **G. M.:** *I can see it clearly. R, for example, although she is very friendly with you during the lesson, showed respect and attention.*
61. **C:** Sometimes she doesn't even have any hesitation in telling me straightforwardly 'I don't feel like having a lesson today because I am tired'. Or sometimes she even leaves her scales text at home. She is not a disciplined child at all, but not even to be a little mischievous is very rare for a child. We don't expect them to be angels.
62. **G. M.:** *Do you attend concerts or other activities with your students?*
63. **C:** Not so often. The children I know, when they were my mother's students, were quite friendly with me and, of course, I could not change because I became their teacher. Generally we don't go out together very often.
64. **G. M.:** *Do you think that a piano teacher should keep up a good relationship with a student outside the classroom?*
65. **C:** Yes, there should be such a relationship. This, however, can be developed during the lesson as well. It is not necessary to have a drink with your students in order to develop a good relationship. There is nothing inherently bad in this, of course, but as some people say, it is not a good thing to share social activities, since the child can get confused and say, 'is he or she my friend or my teacher?' If you get drunk with your teacher, the quality of your relationship may change. Besides, children have their own friends and their own private life. We as teachers don't have so many things in common with them and so we may not be such good company. Although we don't go out very often, our relationship still remains good.
66. **G. M.:** *During R's lesson you paid a lot of attention to her posture.*
67. **C:** Yes, since she is very small and her feet couldn't reach the ground, she usually sways them about in the air. I always insist on her sitting upright on the seat. This helps you to play with relaxed hands. R does not, of course, stiffen her hands like all the other children but I always tell her to keep that posture.
68. **G. M.:** *How do you explain to them your idea of them having to be properly relaxed?*



69. **C:** As for the small children, I always avoid telling them how to do it. But when they see you playing the piano, they imitate you and automatically do exactly what you do. So you don't need to tell them. You simply show it! Teenagers have got over it and usually play a lot more relaxedly. Neither M nor D face such a problem. I have a new student in my class with a very long hand, which is so tight that it looks crippled. She likes playing pieces that she doesn't know well and tries to play them, although they are beyond her abilities, and then, of course, she gets her hands hardened. This hardship is something that I try to get over at a slow pace. I am always in favour of the theory that if a student begins to think which finger or muscle is to be moved at that moment or later on, he or she will never be able to play anything. Gradually, I persuade them to listen and not think of the position of their hands but only about what is going to be heard, otherwise they pay more attention to their hand movements than the quality of the sound.
70. **G. M.:** *In the same lesson you used a lot of expressions to describe a feeling such as 'gentle', and you particularly stressed the way to succeed in presenting the harmonic progression, telling her 'that's the note that we are climbing on to'. You try to talk in a language that bears no relation to music, but at the same time is as descriptive as when describing the way one walks or speaks.*
71. **C:** I cannot directly speak in a musical language to a small child like R. If you said to her 'crescendo' she wouldn't have a clue what you were talking about. If you tell her, however, 'to climb on', then she realises right away that she has to try harder.
72. During the lesson everything is done spontaneously in my effort to explain and make the children understand how to play better. I am very fond of teaching. I don't regard it as a 'sacrifice'. I enjoy teaching well and truly.
73. **G. M.:** *That was quite apparent during the lessons I was fortunate to be present at.*
74. **C:** Although in this particular excerpt I had flu...
75. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to say about R?*
76. **C:** No, let's go on.

**C4 F: BACH, PRELUDE E FUGUE FROM 'THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER', VOL. 1, IN B-FLAT MAJOR**

77. **G. M.:** *You told me that F hasn't been your student from the start.*

78. **C:** F came from Agrinio [a provincial town in South West Greece]. She enrolled in the University of Athens in the department of Musicology. She had had some experience in piano playing in Agrinio, so she continued at the 'Conservatory of Athens'. Neither Mr G. nor Mrs V. could take her due to their lack of time, and they recommended her to me. As she is a former student of another conservatory, she is now having a hard time. She recently played at a concert and played well.

79. **G. M.:** *Do you find that there is anything that you can improve in her playing?*

80. **C:** F, who has a lot of talent, must first of all learn to better her sense of rhythm. Now, she is playing out of rhythm. Since she had come from another Conservatory, she had to prove that she had the necessary qualifications, not only in the sessions where you were present, and she wanted to make an impression by playing some outstanding pieces in a show-off kind of way, without actually being qualified to do this.

81. **G. M.:** *What on your part could you see that needs improvement in F's general progress?*

82. **C:** Although F's hands are very, very small, they are very versatile. Because of the fact that she doesn't pay much attention to the rhythm, I would like to make her alert. She starts with a certain tempo and ends up with a different one. This is one of the worst mistakes in music, especially when it is not written in the score. I also was annoyed during that excerpt that she kept on ignoring the pauses and she did not keep the notes as long as they should last. She didn't make the pause when she should, and directly went on to play the next voice. Not making the pause wasn't actually as wrong as not having the mentality you know a fugue requires. As a fugue is a polyphonic piece and voices move simultaneously but independently from one another, the children are very slow in picking them up and usually play the pieces as if they were only one melody and accompaniment. If one thought and studied every

voice separately as if the piece were to be performed by a choir, not by a piano, then one would play it in exactly the way a composer would like.

83. **G. M.:** *Do you suggest that they should sing during their studying?*

84. **C:** I do to all the other children, but for F I needn't since she herself enjoys singing. Actually F and I sing together. She does one voice and I do the other during the lesson. I always insist that my students should listen to the pieces that they are going to study from CDs or at a concert.

85. **G. M.:** *Would you recommend any particular pianists to them?*

86. **C:** Sometimes I recommend a certain pianist I really like. The children at sometime having heard many pianists, would be able to play the same pieces much better. At a certain point I always take great care to get the children gradually and conservatively to develop their own point of view. It is obvious that having heard a lot of performances automatically you tend to copy them. That's not what we are looking for. I have heard someone who is a member of a number of examination committees complain that the members quite often witness students' performances which are really bad copies of the ones they have listened to on CDs or at concerts. That doesn't make any sense, and I want my students to avoid it, not only at the time when they are to play at an examination, but at every given occasion, because I want them to learn *music* and not to copy even the best pianist. That's why I always maintain that they should listen to CDs. I advise them to listen to a CD at the beginning before they play the piece, in between, and at the end, just to notice some basic things, such as the tempo. It could also be the case that my students and I have got the meaning of the piece wrong, and someone like Rubinstein could help us understand it a lot better through a recording. I am against copying the way that a pianist makes a crescendo or a diminuendo.

87. **G. M.:** *At one moment you told me that what you are looking for is to control the sound. How would you describe the sound you are after?*

88. **C:** For me, a 'carved' sound is the most beautiful one. What I mean is, the sound that a piano makes is very boring. It is not like the sound of a violin, which vibrates. Piano sound is a monotonous, continuous thud. We have to make it interesting.

Great composers have composed all kinds of repertoire for the piano. What I mean by a ‘carved’ sound is when a pianist succeeds in making everything distinguishable with clarity in a piece, so as not to get the same piano sound when someone plays a melody as when they play an accompaniment, or something melodramatic or merry, or something from Debussy, Mozart, Brahms or Chopin. That’s my definition of a beautiful sound. This could be achieved through imagination or subconsciously, and to get this you have to have some kind of artistic inclination, that is to be able to control your sound, and not to be afraid. That’s why I ask my students to control their sound by using their ears, so that they do not play in a harsh way or play like ‘a fly’, as my mother used to say about those who played in a softer way than necessary. As singers try to make their voices cover as many notes as possible, so do we with the piano. There are no limits to how well we can play. There is always room for improvement. All these constitute my goals as far as the student and I are concerned.

89. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to add?*

90. **C:** No, I feel I’ve told you everything that I know on the matter...

#### **C5 V: BEETHOVEN, OPUS 2, 2<sup>ND</sup> PART**

91. **G. M.:** *In this excerpt, I noticed that you were listening to V’s performance with great care and attention without making any remarks at all. Is this something that you do with a particular purpose in mind?*

92. **C:** I am going to tell you the whole truth. I do it first, because it relieves me. Secondly, when the piece is difficult and the student is at an advanced level and he knows it quite well, I am just curious to find out how far he has gone. I also do it to get him used to playing a piece from the beginning to the end without interruption. If I interrupt him during those two times a week when we have the sessions he is going to miss the chance of playing continuously before someone, which would have helped him when he is called upon to perform in front of an audience. You see, to be able to play for twenty minutes and concentrate on what we are doing is something we have to learn. We have the examination in summer, so we take that as a rehearsal. Usually, I tell them to play it again and then I pass any comments or

they themselves tell me what difficulties they are faced with, and together we work out what was good and what was not.

93. **G. M.:** *What points were you trying to teach him in this lesson?*

94. **C:** You must have noticed, of course, that I told him whatever I usually tell the others, that is, to watch out for the harmonic progression, the musicality, in case something is not clearly heard, or the tempo is not what it should have been, or the rhythm, or the pedal.

95. **G. M.:** *In this particular excerpt, you told him that at some points it was as if a whole orchestra was playing and you compared this to a symphony.*

96. **C:** This is not an invention of mine. Everyone says that we should play all Beethoven's pieces as if the audience was supposed to be listening to an orchestra, not a piano. On the other hand, they say that a pianist who plays Mozart should perform as if his audience were listening to an opera. This is well known and I insist on it. At one time, a girl had played very well at a seminar by Gevaert. He said to her, 'you should study books and go to painting exhibitions'. He told her in other words that she lacked imagination. Imagination is a necessity when it comes to playing the piano. The teacher in his endeavour to inspire his students might say something wrong, like 'climb on', which I usually say to my students. I have to make even little R understand that. It is one thing to ascend and another to descend. When I am talking about various musical instruments it sounds odd to a student who is going to play the piano. Playing the piano is altogether different from trying to produce the sound of a violin or a flute. The main thing is that a pianist should set his mind and imagination on the music which is to follow before starting to play. V is especially talented, and at the same time a very serious communicator, as he knows how to study in the right way and is quite conscientious. In other words, he's got all the qualifications to play the piano well. He is, however, very timid and reserved. When I say 'reserved' I mean that he never takes any steps on his own initiative to do something, and expects you to act as a guide. He doesn't even do anything that the score has, if you don't tell him to look closer at whatever it is on it. He should learn to do things on his own. I am particularly keen on this point, especially with V.

97. **G. M.:** *Is it that you are trying to get your students to take the initiative?*
98. **C:** At some stage, they should be more autonomous, taking into serious consideration, of course, a sincere respect for the composer's music and intentions. There must come a day when they can hold their own without a teacher's guidance.
99. **G. M.:** *How would you expect V to be playing in the future?*
100. **C:** V can definitely become a pianist. However, he doesn't have the kind of personality that would make him a professional. He has, ...unfortunately, a very good character! He is honest but not versatile in his public relationships. Although he is sixteen years old he is very mature for his age. He and R could become pianists. V could perform before an audience.
101. **G. M.:** *In this excerpt, you were peculiarly interested in the clarity of the two voices and in your insistence that there should be deep breathing between the phrases. I clearly noticed that you pay attention to how their mind functions and I would like to ask you if you recommend the study that we call 'practising away from the piano'.*
102. **C:** Not only do I recommend this to them, but I myself do this in order to learn the notes of the pieces that I intend to study more easily. I know someone who learns all his pieces thoroughly on the table. He has not, however, managed to play the piano so well, because they need to be heard too. You have to see if whatever you have in your mind can be heard on the piano as well as you imagine it. I recommend this kind of study only when someone wants to learn the piece over a long period of time. It is a time-consuming study. I generally believe that, just as Beethoven put his mind into it when composing a piece, so should a performer in order to play in the way Beethoven intended. Beethoven and all the others didn't walk in their sleep. They knew very well whatever they were composing. They didn't use only their active instinct. Why should a pianist play only by instinct? His common sense is needed there too. Otherwise it wouldn't be fair to the composers. That's why I say they should play with their intellect as well as their imagination, since in a breathing space it needs imagination to realise that something has finished and something else will begin. Nevertheless, whenever we musicians hear the word

'brain' we think of insensitivity. We think that if our brain is at work there is no place for our heart. As far as I'm concerned, that's wrong.

103. **G. M.:** *I have nothing else to ask you regarding this particular excerpt unless you have something for me.*

104. **C:** No, let's carry on.

#### **C6 D: BACH, PRELUDE, IN B MAJOR**

105. **G. M.:** *What were you trying to get in this excerpt?*

106. **C:** D was playing a Prelude where there was a motivo, and, whenever it came up, he stopped following the rest of the voices. He often does that. That's why the first thing that I told him was not to lose a very important voice. At a certain moment, like a fugue, a voice plays the theme but at a later stage it does not. That doesn't mean that, when it doesn't have the theme, we don't listen to it. We have to follow the whole voice whatever it plays.

107. **G. M.:** *I saw you reprimanding him for the movement of his body. How is it then that, in your own opinion of course, body movement affects music playing?*

108. **C:** I don't think I like people who move about and display anxiety with their bodies. I prefer someone to sit quietly and play. D moves in the same way in everything he plays. This is rather a bad way of expressing one's self.

109. **G. M.:** *Since I last saw him has he made any progress, and if so, how much?*

110. **C:** Yes, he has learnt first of all to play his notes with better expression.

111. **G. M.:** *In all your sessions, like this one, you insisted on the piece being played as one unit.*

112. **C:** Yes, I always insist on that. You would certainly have noticed during the sessions at which you were present that we didn't insist on technique. As a rule, we insist on that, but for the children you listened to, that wasn't the first time they had played the pieces. They had reached a fair level of attainment. If they do meet with

some difficulty in technique we come back again. Never be of the opinion that we do not take technique into consideration. I have come to a point where, when you have to play thousands and thousands of demisemiquavers, it is completely different to think of them as sixteen thousand notes, rather than as four units. In this way, you don't get as tired when you know that you have to play four units as when you think of having to play numerous demisemiquavers. You'll keep control over each note but it is an unbelievable ordeal to play a piece if you are thinking of each note individually. If you come to think of it, there are hundreds and hundreds of notes in every piece. Just imagine a diploma examination that lasts two hours. Wouldn't there be innumerable notes? I once had a student who was studying like this. She can't have been learning musicality. Finally, she got a degree. She must have learnt fewer notes...[she laughs]. When she got stuck at a certain point, she just couldn't move on. She knew only notes. She didn't know units or where the pieces were leading you. For me, this particular student had no talent. She didn't learn music. She managed to get a degree but what she did with that, God only knows...

113. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything else to add?*

114. **C:** No, let's go on to the next student.

**C7 M: BRAHMS, OPUS 118, INTERMEZZO, ALLEGRO NON ASSAI, MA MOLTO APPASSIONATO**

115. **G. M.:** *You told me that M, along with her piano studies, is studying at the department of Musicology in the University of Athens. Do you think that she can cope with both of them?*

116. **C:** In such cases, it all depends on character and strength, as well as on the teachers that one has in attending those two courses. One needs teachers to guide you in the essentials. At the 'Conservatory of Athens' students have a lot of other compulsory subjects, such as History of Music, Morphology, Fugue and Counterpoint. The more subjects one knows, the better one's piano studies become. Do you remember Mrs Phoebe Vallinda, your piano teacher, who taught Piano Pedagogy, who insisted on us obtaining wider knowledge if we aimed at learning the piano? Well, she was absolutely right!



117. **G. M.:** *Are you of the opinion that a University degree of an altogether different faculty is part of piano studies?*
118. **C:** You might not learn the piano directly because of your University studies. It constitutes, however, believe it or not, a small part of Music Education. Consequently all the rest, someone could say, is regarded as not having any connection with the piano. If, on the other hand, we want to learn the piano well, we have to read various books, listen to music on other instruments, attend plays in the theatre or watch films. In other words, we must be broad-minded. When we have to play great music pieces, such as Schumann's, what we are looking for is not for M, V or G to express themselves. It is that we should convey Schumann's meaning. I don't see it as something that has to do with the pianist, but with the composer. The performer is the means by which we listen to what Schumann wanted to convey. It's like an actor who recites Hamlet's monologue. He wants to convey what Shakespeare had in mind. We might admire the actor for his excellent presentation of the monologue and forget Shakespeare.
119. **G. M.:** *As for the children in Greece who usually take up other courses in addition to the piano, what would you have to say to that?*
120. **C:** I don't think that studying music, especially in Greece, contributes to high rates of unemployment. Everywhere studying for most professions can lead to unemployment. Overseas, however, I think one is not often allowed to study on more than one course. I remember in Germany, where I studied, that you were not permitted to attend Polytechnics as well as the Academy of Music. That is, you were not allowed to hold two University places. Conservatories in Greece are not seen as academies. So in Greece, there are students who could become pianists, but they seem to be fond of their studies, for instance, at the School of Architecture, so they are compelled to study both. This might not be so anywhere abroad so it might appear strange to them. Our children, however, manage it. Why shouldn't they do so? I don't think they do it because music doesn't bring employment.
121. **G. M.:** *Would you like to tell me what you intended to get out of your student in this excerpt?*

122. **C:** I was trying to make her understand the expression. That is to make it more dramatic and interesting. At the same time I did my best to teach her the harmonic progression and how the phrases are connected. I like M's playing very much. What I don't like with her is that she plays all the pieces in the same way. She keeps on playing, whether it is Beethoven or Brahms, in a merry way, using the pedal in the same way, or making the same legato. She never seems to alter anything. She may be right. But on second thoughts, she is not. She doesn't do it because she has her own point of view. She does it purely by instinct. Every student has his own way of playing. The tutor should tell him the same things because music never changes. It is what it is. Each and every student needs a specific approach to make him understand it. Each one has his own character, personality, as well as background, experience, dexterity, and shortcomings. Each one differs in IQ, state and type of hand, hearing, and family background.

123. **G. M.:** *How does the family come into the learning of the piano? I would like you to give me a sincere answer. Did the fact that your mother was a good pianist and a good teacher help you in your studies?*

124. **C:** Yes, she helped me a lot. I grew up listening to classical pieces even before I was born. In my mother's womb I listened to preludes by Chopin. And we now know that embryos listen to the same music as their mother. You can imagine what images I had when I was born, because they say that beauty comes out of those images. I had them even before I was born. Not only my mother, but my father as well, listened to classical music. My mother is a very good music tutor, as you know, and I had very good musical roots, as they told her later. When I was twelve, we used to have fights, but we said, 'if we carry on like this we're going to ruin the home'. Some people would ask me, 'isn't it hard to have a pianist as a mother?' But I didn't have any problem at all. If Sgouros [the famous and gifted Greek pianist] had had a child and wanted him to become a pianist, the child would definitely have had a problem. You might ask me 'why am I talking especially about Sgouros?' I talk about him because he is well known and is regarded as being very talented. We didn't have such a problem. And if we did have it, it didn't show itself. During my teens however we did have such a crisis, which is, of course, common when the child doesn't want to follow his parents professionally.

125. **G. M.:** *What impact do you find your students' parents have on their offspring regarding the piano studies?*

126. **C:** Parents do affect their children's attitudes. They influence them in some way in the quality of their personality. V, for instance, has been brought up in a way that I would say is perfect. Generally, he seems to be a good character and behaves himself like a gentleman, whatever that word implies. And that is learnt at home, and not at school, in the streets, or anywhere else. So parents have a very strong effect on their children's conduct. There are students who enrol in music classes because their mums hadn't had the chance to do so when they were young, and think that their children should take advantage of what's being offered to them, even though they themselves wouldn't want to. Children, as a rule, start their piano sessions at a very early age, and if their parents don't agree to it, they don't either. It is, first of all, hard for a parent to go to and from a conservatory accompanying such a little child. You know how it is. If they cannot cope financially, the child can get a scholarship, study at the conservatory and have everything at his disposal on photocopies that would be freely given by his teacher. Finance, however, is an important factor in every aspect of life and not only in piano studies.

127. **G. M.:** *Would you like to add anything to the above?*

128. **C:** No, let's carry on.

#### GENERAL QUESTIONS

129. **G. M.:** *You told me that little R can follow the notes in the score and made me understand that you regard this as a must. Does this mean that you are in favour of sight-reading?*

130. **C:** R, in comparison with other children of her age, is very good at sight-reading. Usually children who are good at listening learn their pieces by heart without looking at the score. R, however, follows the score in her imagination. This is very good for her future studies. Ability in sight-reading is a very useful thing to possess, because it is one thing to need two hours to learn a piece and another to

require only half an hour. I don't think that if a person is good at sight-reading he is a better musician than someone else who isn't.

131. **G. M.:** *Do you get them to practice it, if they don't possess it?*

132. **C:** No, because sight-reading is a compulsory course, and it is another tutor's duty. That is, it is something that I don't ask the student to do during our piano lesson. Sight-reading is one of the instinctive abilities. It can be improved if a person studies a large number of pieces during an academic year.

133. **G. M.:** *Do you draw up a schedule with the pieces they are going to play throughout the year?*

134. **C:** In the 'Conservatory of Athens' we have a pre-defined schedule showing what each and every person has to play each year, depending on the level one is at. This means that I don't have to worry what everyone is going to play, especially in this conservatory. The only thing I have to do is to see what is suitable for every student to play. On the other hand, students always have their own ambitions in choosing the pieces. I always, for my part, work out my schedule for what I would like them to play.

135. **G. M.:** *Besides what I witnessed in the class, is your teaching continued at all at home?*

136. **C:** My teaching and my students are always on my mind. At any given moment, and no matter what I am doing at home, I always keep reconsidering why such and such a student was in that particular state of mind. The solution to the problem might come at any moment unrelated to the classroom. It appears that the answer comes instinctively. In addition to what repertoire they are going to play I concern myself with many other things, such as their personality. I try to understand my students. My mind is all day long occupied with my students. I don't think it could be otherwise.

137. **G. M.:** *Your own teachers have affected you not only in the way you perform but the way you teach, haven't they?*

138. **C:** From each and every teacher I have learnt a lot and I cherish them, love them and respect them all. They have played an important part in the way I perform and teach.
139. **G. M.:** *How would you characterise a piano teacher?*
140. **C:** I would say that a good teacher is one who guides the child, one who teaches the basic principles that a learner needs to be able to cope with the pieces he is going to play. For instance, I am attempting to bring to light the student's good points and at the same time to enliven them. To help him become aware of his shortcomings and try to master them, since to conquer them seems beyond his ability. To bring him to the right path, and to make him become independent and avoid using me as a crutch. I consider it very important that a student at some stage should be made to hold his own, not to come to you every time he finds a slight difficulty. He should be able to study on his own, and this I have achieved very successfully as far as my students are concerned, I think.
141. **G. M.:** *Since you have done some postgraduate studies in Germany has it in any way been put to use, on your part, with regard to your students? Is the 'German school' mentality to be found in your teaching?*
142. **C:** I had an English teacher in Germany so this is not the case.
143. **G. M.:** *About the position of the hands, for example, what would you say?*
144. **C:** It is impossible for the position of the hands on the piano to be fixed because one has to play numerous things that are completely different. It is one thing to play only one note and another two or three notes, a scale, a staccato or a legato. I think there isn't a set placing of the hands on the piano. As a general rule every piano player does have the same hand position, because it is inevitable.
145. **G. M.:** *For a beginner at the start of the very first lesson how would you go about teaching the position of his hands?*
146. **C:** For the little children, you show them by playing the piece yourself, and then they do it themselves. I don't agree with what is usually said to children, that they should imagine themselves holding oranges, apples or even eggs whenever they use

their hands on the piano. A child would then think that, whatever he is expected to play, his hands would have to keep the same position and think probably that he was being asked to play with his fingernails. It is not natural. I tell them, of course, that they should sit erect in the centre of the stool with palms facing downwards, but at the same time I don't set guidelines. You only guide them to learn to listen to the quality of their sound. There is the old saying 'a musician's own ears are his brain'. Even a small child should be able to keep control over the quality of the sound, since it is a different thing to hear it on the piano at home, at a large music hall, and in a small room. As the conditions change, you have to feel at home with each particular one.

147. **G. M.:** *How do you approach a beginner who is a little child when learning his first piece?*

148. **C:** First of all, the first reading must be right. It seems that the mistakes that we make at the beginning haunt us for the rest of our lives. It may be because whatever we learn first we learn best. When you learn something wrong at the beginning to delete it and start learning it again is a downright arduous task. Everything must be placed in the correct position right from the start. First of all, you must get the right notes, use the right fingers, so they won't have to be changed later, get the right rhythm, and afterwards when we have learnt the piece, we can start philosophising.

149. **G. M.:** *What do you think is the reason for the fall in music school attendances?*

150. **C:** First, there are now a lot of new conservatories. There is one in every little neighbourhood. The children have a very heavy school syllabus, too. It's not a matter of money. It is a matter of time. Children have no spare time for the piano. Our educational system has changed a lot and children need some kind of help with their own school subjects, and when it comes to examinations, they take up private lessons.

151. **G. M.:** *Is there a difference between your students at the 'Conservatory of Athens' and those at the other one?*

152. **C:** At the 'Conservatory of Athens' students go on with their studies no matter what their problems are. There I cannot think of the reason why the children are

determined to spare time for their music courses. In the other conservatory students are unwilling to go through such a process. They regard it as they do their English, French or ballet lessons; ‘ah, well, we might as well just learn a bit of piano music’.

153. **G. M.:** *In which of the two conservatories do you feel most at home?*

154. **C:** I wouldn’t like to say. Both are all right, with the only difference that in the second one we don’t have any examination or time pressure. It is a different approach. You cannot compare them. For me, the ‘Conservatory of Athens’ is a great challenge. There I feel that, besides teaching for a special purpose, I learn at the same time a whole variety of things.

155. **G. M.:** *I haven’t got anything else to ask you. You’ve answered all my queries and requests. I thank you wholeheartedly for your co-operation.*

156. **C:** And I thank you for giving me the chance to talk about the piano.

## ‘D’'S INTERVIEW

This fourth interview took place in Athens. ‘**G.M.**’ is Georgia Markea (the interviewer). ‘**D**’ is a name given to the teacher for reasons of anonymity.

### D1 M: BACH, CHANSON, IN D MINOR

1. **G .M.:** *I was impressed by the fact that while the student was performing you were standing so far away that even the video camera couldn’t get you into the picture. It appeared that you did it on purpose as I heard you saying ‘I am moving further away so that I can hear you better’. Would you elaborate on that a little more?*

2. **D:** When a student is at M’s level, that is, when he can learn on his own, he doesn’t need his teacher at his side to correct his notes. There are cases, of course, when the teacher can come back closer to him. But, at the same time, I must confess that he can hear him play a lot better from a distance of more than five metres. Then, he doesn’t busy himself with minor details but with the basic structure and the harmonic progression. I believe that it’s something like building a new house where you have to lay the foundations first and then start building the rest of the

construction. If you start from the minor details you never reach your objective. I am one of those people who always maintain that everything should be done simultaneously. You won't learn the notes first, then think of the dynamics and lastly the pedal. Everything should be done at exactly the same time. Even in the case of smaller children I want them to be aware of the same sense of the whole as a unity and instil in them the idea of perfection. I know that a child at the beginning has a wide variety of directions that he can follow. When, however, he knows where he is heading, he is definitely going to follow that course with more confidence and interest and, furthermore, with a better result. He knows his way.

3. Let's say the teacher has to give him the guidelines. Gradually he will improve and then the teacher would be more demanding as far as minor details are concerned, as they are a decisive factor at this stage. You cannot start from trifles and without the harmonic progression being present at the time. Not only for me, but also for every teacher, I think there is the danger of him being caught up in those details. The danger is not only for the student but for the teacher as well.
4. Our love and affection for music should be kept going although there might be some kind of fulfilment. And the latter takes place whenever you are close to the piano and hear only the 'thud' of the sound. Distance gives you the chance to keep on dreaming.
5. **G .M.:** *You asked him to do a lot of reading for the pieces and learn the music in a kind of literary way. You also stressed that Bach's music is divine and Bach himself is the best composer.*
6. **D:** Music is a social expression, besides being the finest art, and reflects the values and the spirit of the age it is connected with. You must go deeper into the meaning of the music pieces and get the insight of the society where all these were created. For Bach, for instance, we know that he wholeheartedly involved himself in religion. In his works his deep devotion to God is quite apparent.
7. Recently I happened to read an article about Luther and how he established Protestantism. It was one of the most intensely innovating movements of ideas, beliefs and values the world has ever witnessed. For the establishment of such a great religious movement and in such a perfect way it is apparent that there was a



demand and need for it. Protestantism moved purity and spiritual energy in such a way that could not leave Bach's sublime world untouched. What I mean is that a person must be acquainted with such a thing to perform anything of Bach. If one is not familiar with what Bach went through, one could doubt whether the great composer was a very religious man or whether he composed just to earn his daily bread. A learner should approach the composer not only as an individual but as a creator as well.

8. In Beethoven's Sonata opus 111 that M was playing, he should have been aware why the composition was in two parts and not three. It's the only great Sonata where we find two parts. On the other hand, it is a fact that Beethoven himself said 'do not expect a third part'. It was his own choice. It wasn't that he was unwilling to write the third part.
9. **G .M.:** *Do you think that there is a composer whose meanings would be harder to comprehend for a student?*
10. **D:** It is always the case that what is easy for one student is hard for another. A student endowed with talent, physical hand skills and a high I. Q. can easily play the music of any composer of any age. That doesn't go for the students who have stuck to the same piece for a long period of time. As for your question, I have this to say. You might be very talented but not be able to play Chopin. This, of course, is not only true for students but for distinguished pianists as well. Chopin appears to be very special. I still insist that even some great pianists cannot play Chopin. You either can or cannot. You might not be able to teach him at all. You can teach a little Chopin just for the sake of doing it. Even then, anyone who is not born to play Chopin won't succeed. A lot of people believe this. The greater a musician is, the more he is aware of his relation to Chopin. That is, if he belongs to those capable of playing Chopin or not.
11. **G .M.:** *At one stage without being asked you told me that M was your best student. What basic potential makes him so?*
12. **D:** I have another child who is as talented. I mean D. I don't know which of the two is the most talented. Either of them can have weaknesses or strength in certain points. M is more disciplined and this is good for a teacher. I don't know if this is

good for himself as well, but for a teacher who can expect good results it is very convenient for his task. It would help the student as well during his course.

13. **G .M.:** *Referring to one of your students, namely R, you said that it's a pleasure to teach her. What exactly did you mean?*

14. **D:** She is a very sensitive girl, an authentic personality and is very deeply concerned about this occupation. The piano means everything to her. I don't like it if some people take the piano course as something that they have to finish and be done with. If their aim is to get a diploma from the 'Conservatory of Athens', just to possess a document of importance, for me that is not good enough.

15. **G .M.:** *Why do students nowadays enrol at a Conservatory, and especially this particular one?*

16. **D:** It's a matter of the teacher. Sometimes they choose the 'Conservatory of Athens' just for its reputation. It is, nevertheless, worth being proud of those children who venture to involve themselves in such an important course. It seems, unfortunately, that this is a dead-end world for pianists. That not only goes for Greece but everywhere. There are so many good pianists that there hardly seems to be room for any more. There is a lot of competition in sight and children find it hard to make a career out of music. There is a plethora of graduates with Honours from the Paris 'Conservatoire' and most other famous international academies, believe me.

17. This commitment requires a lot of devotion but it's worthwhile in the long run as it entails a complete circle of intellectual life. Even if one drops out, which in all probability will take place some time during the course, one is, in the long run, endowed with a rich world of skills and abilities to cope with whatever the future has in store. I mean it is training in dedication and discipline, of intellect, soul, and mind, in other words of your very ego. People very seldom get such a good chance to cultivate their great potential. That's why I have come to the conclusion that music lessons, especially those of the piano, are great contributors to creating personality. The piano possesses this polyphonic element which makes the brain able to be successfully active in a large number of activities. I suppose that with stringed instruments your brain and your heart, as well as your sense of sound, are trained as much as in the piano. But in those instruments we don't get that wide

variety. For the young man who studies the piano this is what I call ‘a great exercise’.

**18. D:** Although piano learning is a hard task and many children are conscious of it, they still keep on studying it as it seems to be offering them mental and physical contentment. That’s why I am of the opinion that students should not be discouraged by not having yet achieved what they want, or be made to drop out because of an apparent shortage of professional opportunities.

*19. G .M.: Would you have anything to add or shall we move on?*

**20. D:** Let’s talk about R.

#### **D2 R: SCHUBERT, SONATA, 1<sup>ST</sup> PART, ALLEGRO MODERATO, IN A MAJOR**

*21. G .M.: What were you actually trying to get out of this excerpt?*

**22. D:** I was particularly interested in making her express herself better.

*23. G .M.: You told her she succeeded in combining melancholia and humour. You used beautiful words to describe the mood that she had conveyed, something that you do, as a rule, for all your students.*

**24. D:** It all begins with one feeling that I have about music. That’s where my views spring from.

*25. G .M.: Could this be instilled in a student?*

**26. D:** Yes, as long as the student is really interested in music and his personal progress. Then, the teacher’s attempt at convincing him would be successful. If the student realises that the teacher is simply trying to put into practice whatever he has learnt from other sources, then the learner may not achieve anything, for we know very well that truth is powerful. That is, if the learner becomes aware of the fact that the teacher’s words are authentic and the teacher keeps his words, then the latter will definitely become persuasive. Learners always yearn for a particular kind of ‘catechism’. They need it and it helps them to be relaxed. I tell my students right

from the start of their new piece study, 'do whatever I tell you to, right now, so we won't waste any time, since I'll keep on telling you the same things all the time'.

27. **G .M.:** *I was fortunate to be present at one of those sessions and heard you insisting on that.*

28. **D:** Children have a lot to gain if they obey their teachers during our sessions. Afterwards they can do whatever they like, even make a mess of it. They have a right to. What you get out of music studying, however, is the asset of learning to be disciplined. I think that a child, whose parents appreciate music and can afford to put him in a conservatory, is very lucky. Not only can he become a professional musician, but he can also enjoy playing an easy piece with musicality, or even enjoy listening to it. It is enough to feel full contentment inside.

29. **G .M.:** *Your encouragement of your students is something that attracted my attention and as I know that you are an internationally distinguished pianist I presume you do this for a peculiar reason, don't you?*

30. **D:** It is a combination of two things. First of all, I do it because I always maintain that a teacher should encourage his students. Secondly, it's something that has to do with my own idiosyncrasies. Encouragement brings better results. Learners should feel no fears or inhibitions, especially during their lessons. We've got a loving and affectionate relation here. Music itself is love. So how can you approach love without enthusiasm and intuition?

31. **G .M.:** *This piece was supposed to be played at a concert and you asked her to perform at your own home. You also wanted to know if she had heard herself playing on a tape-recorder. You make specific preparations for a particular performance by one student, don't you?*

32. **D:** I am interested in perfection. What I mean is the road to perfection, since there is no such thing as perfection itself. Giving a chance to a student to perform before an audience in my own house before a concert is just the thing. The same goes for all of us who are experienced artists. The best thing that can happen to anyone before a concert, is to rehearse the pieces in the presence of a small number of people.

33. **G .M.:** *During this lesson you said to her 'your sound and your involvement in the piece were excellent'. What did you mean by that?*
34. **D:** Well, let's look at it this way. Our egos are a hindrance in many ways. But unfortunately you cannot tell the students to forget all about their egos. That's impossible. Besides, it is only natural for them to have inhibitions and feelings of insecurity. Nevertheless you should urge them to be so absorbed in what they are doing that for a short while they forget about their own egos.
35. When you are involved in the piece you must forget all about yourself. If you get involved in whatever you are doing, you forget yourself so much that you concentrate on that and nothing else. So your own personality disappears. That's important. I wish we could do it.
36. **G .M.:** *You mean we serve the composer when playing one of his pieces?*
37. **D:** Yes, but at the same time it is another kind of freedom because, if you learn the piece well, there is, as a consequence, some freedom in this discipline. If you don't know it, what sort of freedom can you have? You will then devote yourself to the audience and you will feel so insecure that neither you nor the audience will be happy about it.
38. **G .M.:** *Would you specify the time when a person can reach a point that could be regarded as the culminating point of musical contentment?*
39. **D:** Ah, well, it seems that each music piece predetermines the demands. Even a small child who tries his hand at Bach, finds that Bach himself makes a lot of demands on him as regards sound, comprehension and alertness. New learners' interest should focus on great composers' compositions even from their first pieces. It is important for them to study easy pieces composed by great musicians. Unfortunately, there is a prevalent modern tendency on the teachers' part to dig up composers who lived after the age of Beethoven or Chopin. There must be some reason why we have forgotten them [she laughs]. One aspect of the truth is the necessity for them to get used to modern music as well. Another thing that they should learn is to recognise whatever they hear being played around them. That is, I do not regard a musician who cannot perform a piece that he hears on the radio or in

a concert hall as a really good one. He should practise that. A musical person is one who comprehends sounds. Conservatories do not put this into practice, I'm sorry to say. There is always a hope, however. Music is, of course, written in black and white, but a person at some time must free himself from the notes. That is step by step to be able to play whatever he hears. A child, for instance, who is learning the piano on his own and is actually good at listening to sounds, must not lose that ability when he moves into a music classroom.

40. **G .M.:** *Would you have anything to say about R or this excerpt any further?*

41. **D:** No, let's move onto the next excerpt.

**D3 Y: BACH, PRELUDE FROM 'THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER', VOL. 1, IN A-FLAT MAJOR**

42. **G .M.:** *What was your interest in this excerpt?*

43. **D:** I was trying to concentrate his attention on the character and the notions of the piece.

44. **G .M.:** *I'd like to ask you a question because I noticed that you paid a lot of attention to your students with regard to the meaning of the piece. Could I have affected in any way your way of teaching by my use of the video camera so that you side-stepped the issue of technique?*

45. **D:** I take a lot of notice of technique, but I believe that it serves another purpose. That is, if there is a staccato somewhere, that in itself must express something. Otherwise, it has no meaning at all. With this particular Bach piece Y was playing, we had to have a brilliant sound. If he is alert enough to get the meaning of the sound he will definitely find what hand movement he must make to bring out this brilliancy. That's why I told you that music must be viewed as a whole. A student should pick out the position of his hands that serves his purpose at that given moment. Y has not as yet found the right hand position so we have to work hard on that.

46. But if I sternly say to him ‘put your fingers like this on the keyboard’, he is likely to make very slow progress. If I tell him, ‘you need this expression, so put your hands like this so that you get this result’, he will understand. Y has already made progress.
47. **G .M.:** *Have all your students begun with you or did you get some of them from other teachers?*
48. **D:** All in all, most of them are mine. M, for instance, has been my student right from the start. I have, however, a small number from other conservatories.
49. **G .M.:** *How would you like your students to be after a few years, if I may ask?*
50. **D:** I would want them to have got acquainted with many of the things that we dealt with during the course and then to forget them and do things of their own, things that have already been made their own, that is, to use their own initiative and energy. When it comes to students like M, I long for the day when they become professional musicians.
51. **G .M.:** *I noticed that your students have something in common and anyone can recognise that they derive their ability peculiarly from your class.*
52. **D:** I generally try to achieve this. There are occasions, of course, when I wish only a few of them had not been in my class.
53. **G .M.:** *What are the points that you feel are not as you wish them to be?*
54. **D:** Their hand position as well as the lack of willingness to learn to read the scores attentively. I had a student once from another Conservatory and in the entrance exams she was placed in the Higher level. That proved to be wrong since she wasn’t competent enough for that level. She had memorised a piece very well, but when she came to my class I found out that she wasn’t able to read the scores or the rhythms. That was terrible! That’s very awkward for a teacher having to start from the beginning again: that is, ‘this is doh, rah etc.’. Imagine students not being able to read the notes in the fah clef and me being a member of the committee who recommended her to be classified at a Higher level!

55. **G .M.:** *You told Y, 'I am very strict with you because I love you'. I wanted to ask you how a good relationship between a teacher and a student could help the student make progress?*

56. **D:** When you believe in the child's potential you ask a lot from him. When I am fond of a child and I can trust him in whatever he attempts, I want him to try as hard as possible. When a learner achieves whatever the teacher expects of him, then the teacher-learner relationship becomes a lot better. This in turn brings some kind of contentment to the student.

57. **G .M.:** *Would you have anything to add to Y's performance?*

58. **D:** No, let's carry on.

#### **D4 D: BRAHMS, CONCERTO N. 2, OPUS 83, ANDANTE ESPRESSIVO**

59. **G .M.:** *What was the main purpose of having this excerpt played?*

60. **D:** D is a very competent pianist and, in my opinion, he can make music his profession. In this particular piece I would have liked him to have paid more attention to the sound and bring out the meaning of the composition as the composer himself would have wanted. That's why I did my best to charm him with the magic of music.

61. **G .M.:** *You told him at a certain stage that that was one of the best pieces in music. I just wanted to know if a student can be influenced by his teacher's attitude towards music.*

62. **D:** Some time ago, I had accompanied his performance by singing some words, you see, um, making up the lyrics off-hand. I do everything I can to make the learner comprehend the meaning of the piece and to be so inspired as to be able to perform it in the best way possible.

63. A teacher can definitely affect a student's performance and make him feel whatever he does is authentic. Then, there are great possibilities of persuading him about the deeper value of music. I just don't believe in the academic way of handling pieces of



music. The moral of the story is that in music there is something like a 'love affair' between the teacher and the student. Both must share the joy of what they are doing.

64. **G .M.:** *Is there anything to be said any further about D?*

65. **D:** Nothing more, just what I have already told you. He is a very talented boy and I am expecting him and M to make great careers as professionals.

#### D5 I: CHOPIN, ETUDE, OPUS 25, N. 7, IN C-SHARP MINOR

66. **G .M.:** *In this excerpt I was puzzled at what you were trying to get out of it. What was it really?*

67. **D:** Well, I was trying to make her realise that at the beginning it had a melancholic touch. Then, it had to become more intensive. I am of the opinion that you cannot have both phrases played in the same way. It is something that I both feel and analyse. I haven't been taught. It's something that springs from my very ego. I believe that, even if the composer intends to present the same two phrases in a sequence with the same dynamics, they shouldn't be played in the same way. We should try to give this kind of impression. This, however, as I said before, is something from my esoteric world, not something that I express for the sake of just saying it. Music is like speech. You cannot repeat a phrase with the same intonation and accentuation in the same way. It is a matter of time and travelling in time. We are not the same as far as time is concerned. Even time changes continually and continuously. Now, in what I am telling you at this very moment the very same phrase expressed later will be completely different in intonation.

68. **G .M.:** *I noticed that you used a number of adverbs in order to make her understand what expression she could give to the excerpt such as 'melancholically', 'quietly' and so on. You also appeared to try hard to challenge her, as well as most of your students', imagination by adding another idea besides music thus trying to find differences and similarities in them.*

69. **D:** I'm trying to elaborate a combination of music knowledge that I am acquainted with and which constitutes my inborn intuition. That's what I am trying to do. I combine the things that I am going to teach and sort them out in words as if I were

to play it on the piano. Besides, I actually play it when the occasion calls for it. As a rule, I put words into it. I am quite well-qualified and experienced in music, I think, but at the same time I do feel it right deep in my heart. When I correct the learners on some points this depends on what mistakes the students make at that very moment, as well as the abilities or difficulties they have there and then. That is a student's performance reflects his tutor's personality. Quite often the teacher has to play it on the piano himself instead of letting the student do it and correcting him on the way. Sometimes you are forced to play it the way the student has played it, although he is not happy about the whole thing. A teacher has, however, to adopt this kind of teaching because the student may not be competent enough to pick up the wrong points in his performance. A learner has to train himself to listen to himself playing.

70. **G .M.:** *Is this why you advise them, as I noticed, to tape-record their performance?*

71. **D:** Yes, I do, since this is the only way for them to listen to whatever they perform.

72. **G .M.:** *Would you have anything else to tell me?*

73. **D:** No, let's carry on.

#### **D6 A AND K: CLEMENTI, SONATINA, OPUS 36, N. 5, PRESTO, IN G MAJOR**

74. **G .M.:** *In this excerpt I was really astonished at the fact that although it was A's session you asked K to accompany her on the piano as if it was one piece for four hands. Was there any reason why you did that?*

75. **D:** K has got a very exuberant personality and if you do not harness him in some way he is likely to overwhelm anybody or anything that comes his way. That's why I asked him to take it as A's session and he had to take second place and let her be in charge. I just try in this way to contribute towards improving their conduct.

76. **G .M.:** *That was a new piece for A. By the way, could I ask you if you have a special kind of approach to every new piece?*

77. **D:** In this piece, because it appeared to be a little boring for a little child to play with only one hand, I asked K to play the other part simultaneously with his one hand. So

she played with the one hand whatever she was prepared to play at this session and at the same time, she had to deal with the piece as a whole. In other words, she listened to it as if she was performing it by herself.

78. **G .M.:** *During your teaching, besides yourself playing the pieces you did everything to instil your notions and ideas in your students. I mean like the previous example.*

79. **D:** People seem to have forgotten the real meaning of ‘playing’ the piano. It’s really a pity that we have ignored it. Both the student and the teacher should enjoy piano teaching, playing and learning.

80. **G .M.:** *Would you like to say something about A and K?*

81. **D:** A and K are not from the same family. I ask K to come a little earlier so that they can play together. Sometimes I ask them to play pieces for four hands on the same piano. K, of course, is at a more advanced level. It is a good thing for them to play together even at this early age.

82. **G .M.:** *Is there anything else to be said about this excerpt?*

83. **D:** No, let’s go on.

#### **D7 S: SCARLATTI, SONATA, N. 106**

84. **G .M.:** *What conclusions were you trying to draw from listening to S’s performance?*

85. **D:** S missed out on the time extension of some notes so that the piece was not presented as one suitable for dancing. If a student had the capacity to study the score very carefully, he would be able to find everything in it. It is apparent that he should have chosen the right score edition. If he keeps close to everything in the score he can approach the character of the piece in a more effective way. For instance, S made some mistakes in reading the score and that’s why she kept on changing the character of the piece and failed to present it as a dance piece.

86. **G .M.:** *Your attention seems to be focused on the musicality of the pieces. Regarding technique improvement would you recommend your students to study scales and exercises?*

87. **D:** Scales and exercises do help a lot. You see, not everyone is prepared to enter the world of music. Why shouldn't one train? Why should athletes train themselves and not musicians? Why shouldn't we take up physical training courses as the latter is an important science?

88. I think that physical education in music, that is finger training, can be achieved through the very pieces themselves. By just studying them one can develop one's technique. When I was younger I maintained that the very pieces themselves helped me, as they were effective contributors to my technique. As I get on in age and experience I see that you need a crystal-clear technique. That is, training in scales, arpeggios, chords, octaves and so many other things. That is why I ask my pupils to adopt them.

89. **G .M.:** *Would you add anything to those things mentioned above?*

90. **D:** No, let's go on. I am inclined to think that I have exhausted the subject.

91. **G .M.:** *I'd like to ask you some general questions since we have finished with the excerpts.*

#### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

92. **G .M.:** *I would like to ask you about the relationship teachers and learners should have with each other.*

93. **D:** I believe this relationship should be very strict as regards music. I mean that I am quite friendly with children, but very adamant about music.

94. **G .M.:** *Do you belong to any music school?*

95. **D:** No, I would say that I believe in a combination of those elements that are found in music schools. It all depends on the individual, his abilities, the shape of the

hands, what a composer's aims are, and the difficulties to be overcome at a given moment.

96. **G .M.:** *Is there a methodological 'secret' to improve technique?*

97. **D:** There is one. If I name it, you are going to burst into laughter. I learned it from Argerich. You play with your fingers facing upwards rather than down on the keyboard.

98. **G .M.:** *Is there a performer that you are especially interested in?*

99. **D:** I adore three of the great performers who, unfortunately, differ altogether. Horowitz whom I admire very much, Rubinstein whenever he plays Chopin, and Richter in a general way, although he doesn't play Chopin so well.

100. **G .M.:** *You have worked in a number of other conservatories. Do you think there are differences between them?*

101. **D:** Look, to find this framework of discipline and the overall element of teacher-learner strictness in the COA helps the students greatly. They leave the classroom fully convinced and self-assured. It's just not the same thing to be a good student at the COA as at any other conservatory, since most of the students at the others are only mediocre. Don't you think all the others seem to fall short in many aspects?

102. **G .M.:** *Many other conservatories have successful graduates. How would you explain that?*

103. **D:** These particular graduates are good. When a child is talented the conservatory plays a secondary role. All in all, it is not unusual for a high proportion of skilful musicians to have a strong bond with the 'Conservatory of Athens'. Those who have managed to graduate from another conservatory and have met with success in their professional life are only exceptions. I wouldn't like to mention any names but it is a well-known fact. They are definitely exceptions.

104. Not only intelligent people graduate from the 'Conservatory of Athens', but many less gifted students are considerably successful since they acquire a fundamental knowledge of music.

105. **G.M.:** *I have nothing else to ask you unless you have more to say. I would like to thank you very much for your co-operation.*

106. **D:** Thankyou too, and I wish you every success.

## 'E''S INTERVIEW

This fifth interview took place in Athens. '**G.M.**' is Georgia Markea (the interviewer). '**E**' is a name given to the teacher for reasons of anonymity.

### **E1 A: BACH, PRELUDE E FUGUE FROM 'THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER', VOL. 1, IN E MAJOR**

1. **G. M.:** *I noticed that you put a lot of emphasis on the scales during this excerpt although he was supposed to play Bach. What would your comments be on that?*
2. **E:** Just before that, as you may have noticed, I had begun the session with scales since I regard them as important. There are scales in every piece, no matter whether it is a Mozart, a Beethoven, a Chopin or anyone's else's. If you are familiar with the scales you can cope with the difficulties of the piece only if you have studied these difficulties on the scales. That's why I always insist on them, as they help, particularly, with the fingers. Often learners use different fingers from the ones they use for the scales and then I ask them, 'why do we spend so much time studying the scales? You learn them for the purpose of playing them when you come across the points that look like scales'. At the COA, however, they have gone too far with it. Scales for them are like the head of the body and they ignore the fact that music is the whole body. That is, if you don't play all the scales at an exam in a perfect way, you are not permitted to go on with your pieces. If you play the pieces extremely well but not the scales, you may fail. I know a case where a girl performed well with her music pieces and with great musicality, but failed! They can take it to such extremes. As for me, scales, of course, are very significant, but we have a lifetime before us to study them. Music is what should be taught. Learners on their own can study scales and I myself will teach them music.

3. **G. M.:** *You have been working for more than two schools of music and furthermore, the most representative of the Greek ones. What differences do you find in each of them?*
4. **E:** In all the private music schools you can detect some kind of laxity, that is they don't press you hard. As for the COA, they say 'only the ones with a good nervous system can stand it'. A lot of people (students as well as teachers) often wonder how I can stand the whole affair for so long. Well, if you are flexible you lead a good life anywhere. But since I have a 'tongue that spits venom', it has worked as a boomerang on me. I keep on giving everyone a piece of my mind, that's why I have a hard time there. I do the work the way I know how, I blurt out whatever I believe, but, quite often, my students pay for my 'sins' when it comes to exams. And I always wonder why my students should have to pay for my attitude towards music.
5. **G. M.:** *Would it be impertinent if I asked you a personal question? Since you don't agree with the whole situation, why did your own children study there?*
6. **E:** I believe that the best teachers were then at the COA. Besides, that was a different time. There was a shortage of good teachers in most of the other music schools. If it were for the present time, most probably I would send them to a private one. There are good teachers in the majority of them. In the end, neither of my children graduated from the COA. Finally they expelled them. To cut a long story short, I myself do not believe that the COA is the best, but first it selects the best students and then there are more students and teachers than any other school, so there is more competition there. Competition is the secret. They get the chance to listen to a large number of colleagues and fellow students while in many others you don't get a good standard of performers. As for me, in all the other schools where I teach I have only got one good student. All the rest are 'mediocre' ones.
7. **G. M.:** *Could you please tell me something about A?*
8. **E:** A has made great progress. He started with me at the second Middle class and up to there he hadn't done much. He was almost self-taught. He hadn't done any etudes or played Bach at all. I started with him right from the beginning, but after one year, he had to do his military service. He was away for a year and a half, and when he returned he couldn't play anything and had a lot of problems. He was talented,

though. He had good hands, he was clever, so his fingers now are very flexible. There is a lot of room for improvement as far as his sound is concerned. As a result, he failed twice at his entrance exams for the 'Higher' level, probably because of stress. His father had threatened to stop paying his fees and forced him to work as a waiter, so he made a mess of it. Now for the third time, he did well despite his fears. He played with musicality. I had given him Beethoven's 'Pathetique' on which we had worked very hard, as he had some technical problems. Although he didn't get over them completely, he finally managed to get an excellent mark, that is nine out of ten. This was the result of his performing musically a very difficult piece (as the 'Pathetique' is considered to be) being also a Beethoven sonata! He also played a Mozart concerto very well (the compulsory piece), of which he had to play the two parts (Adagio and Allegro) and this made it more difficult and most of the candidates had complained about it. So only three out of eight took it.

9. **G. M.:** *A while ago you mentioned A's father. Would you tell me how far parents contribute towards a student's learning the piano?*
10. **E:** Yes, they do [contribute] a lot especially when the child is very young, like L for instance. When she first came to me she was only eight and played very musically and loosely without any sign of stiffness, and, although she had come from an unknown teacher, I liked her. Then I noticed that her mother was always present during her lessons. All the other teachers felt uncomfortable about it. They used to say 'won't she ever leave her alone?' I used to say that, since the little child needed her by her side, let it be so. Whenever she feels confident on her own, she'll do it. Once I asked her mother, 'how come that L has made such progress? She is only eight and moved on to the first class of the Middle level'. 'Look', she said, 'I have always listened to her right from the start. Her teacher asked her to study one line and she was able to learn it right away. Then, I used to tell her 'love, can't we prepare the second line as well?' So without pressing her hard she used to keep control over her from a distance in a gentle way, like a psychologist, a psychiatrist, or a music tutor. She was the perfect teacher for her child. That's why the girl went on successfully. Her mother's contribution to her progress was substantial. You see, if the child was left on her own, she would have done only one line every session. She used to puzzle her with a question 'what do you think comes next, E?' She used



to pretend that she didn't know anything, and L would keep on progressing without being aware of it. There are, however, mothers who are exactly the opposite. They press them so hard that the children begin to hate music, like P, who gave up piano lessons on the eve of his diploma examinations! He said to me 'I don't like playing the piano. I like listening to others doing it. My parents pressed me so hard that now I don't even want to look at it'. P had never come out so openly with me. One day I asked him, 'just tell me how I am to treat you, like a small child who always asks for advice every time or like a mature man of twenty-five. You don't talk, you don't co-operate with me and it looks as if I am talking to myself'. Then he said, 'I have to be pressed hard to open my mouth'. P's parents played a negative role as by pressing him hard they made him hate the piano, which perhaps he would have loved if they hadn't. Parents do play an important part. On another occasion a child's mother said to me 'as she is not good at school, let her start studying the piano', and I only just restrained myself from telling her off, but I said to her, 'well, my dear lady, do you know what music means? Do you know that music is one of the most difficult things anyone could take up?'

11. **G. M:** *I would also like to ask you what you didn't like in this particular piece and why you insisted on him singing and, generally, what were your aims in this excerpt?*

12. **E:** A doesn't know how to make phrases. As we start the phrase, we have to anticipate the end of it, and at the same time think how we are going to do the notes in between, so that the whole phrase ties in. He played every single note separately. He couldn't see it as a series of notes that lead you somewhere. He didn't sing it. You need to have some maturity, but if you try hard you can reach it. I remember when I was in Vienna, they used to repeat, 'sing, sing, sing!' all the time. That has got deeply rooted in me and I cannot stand listening to any playing without singing. I'd rather listen to mistakes being made in notes than mistakes in musicality.

13. **G. M:** *I noticed that when your students made note mistakes, you seemed not to get upset at all.*

14. **E:** I believe that sooner or later they are going to learn the notes. That's not difficult. I, of course, usually correct them. During the first lesson I do that. When children,

however, make the same mistake over and over again, ah, then, I get upset. I regard it as a 'couldn't care less' attitude. P, one of my students, accused me of being an unfair tutor – contrary to what you think of me – that is I philosophise over everything, and then explain to each student and expect him to play the way I'd like him to. This usually happens. But, unfortunately, I am very spontaneous, and I suffer a lot when whatever I listen to does not have my approval. Whenever they play something that I really like, I do enjoy it. In cases where something appears to me coarse, unprepared and offhand, I just explode. I am very patient with them for the first and the second time, since you don't expect them to be perfect at first. However, when they keep on repeating many times over the very same mistake, which you have pointed out to them, oh, God knows how many times, then, I am not a Saint, so I yell out to them. Well, later on, I do feel ashamed of myself.

15. **G. M:** *Would you have anything to add regarding A's lesson?*

16. **E:** I don't think so. Let's carry on.

**E2 H: FAURE, N. 31, IN F MAJOR**

17. **G. M:** *You told me that that was one of the first piano lessons on this particular piece. Now, generally, how do you approach the first lesson?*

18. **E:** First of all, I want my students to watch carefully every detail of the scores. That's where the proper interpretation of the piece begins. To look into the way they are going to play the notes, the rhythm, or any essential part, as well as they can. If the learner has learnt those basic things and moved on further on his own, then I myself go on to a more specific and detailed way: to make him bring out the music itself. When I noticed that H, for instance, was trying to find the right notes on the chord, I could not possibly insist on the music of the phrase although I was referring to that. It would have been too early at that time. For that particular child, however, I would dare ask for some more since I know that she is quite aware as far as musicality is concerned. If a child lacks that sense, I don't ask for any further work, as is the case with one of my students, who, although she is very intelligent, when it comes to music, cannot understand or is too reserved to express herself. She tells me 'I don't feel comfortable at playing forte'. To make her do it, I am usually harsh

with her. I tap her back and shout 'F-O-R-T-E'. You have to find a way of helping every single child to do whatever you would like him to. Some children willingly accept such strict treatment. Others don't. What I want to say is that, as the beginning of the piece approaches, I start by putting a lot of weight on playing the proper score. That's where I start. If one does that on the first or the second lesson, then we work out the subject of the music. For me, it is essential not only to be acquainted with the structure, but above all, to know the character of the piece. As you know and as every musician does, there are many kinds of forte and piano. You can play a piano very gently, sentimentally, with an inner intensity or in numerous other ways. To get that result, anyway, you have, first of all, to teach the deeper notions of the piece. I believe that a student should be well aware of that.

19. **G. M:** *During your lessons you seem to use a lot of similes and well-formed phrases to make your students understand the character of the piece. I would like to ask you, is there any composer whose notions you regard as hard to convey to your students?*
20. **E:** All great composers for me are difficult because their music demands a lot. Mozart, for instance, is the most difficult of them all. That's why he is not usually presented the way he should be. He is mostly approached as if his pieces were some kind of etude: at a fast pace with 'flying fingers', or hitting hard on the keyboard, whereas Mozart demands a combination of a lot of elements being under control simultaneously if you want the right results. As for the COA, they demand that Mozart pieces be performed at a very fast tempo. Ah, well, two years ago, a very well-known foreign pianist had performed a Mozart piece in Athens very slowly. To tell you the truth, that was the best piece ever performed live, for me. Even most of the COA teachers attending the performance admitted it. When it comes to teaching they insist on playing it fast. Beethoven, Chopin and Bach are difficult, too. Romantic composers are the easiest for me. There is no particular difficulty in understanding Liszt's musicality. It only requires pathos and grandiose performance. I, personally, do not hold Liszt in high esteem and I also cannot understand Schumann. We just do not get along well. For me, he is hard to understand. A student of mine who, at present, is studying in Moscow, tells me that he regards Schumann as very intellectual. For me, that 'intellectual' means that whatever he composed was not spontaneous, but he had to reflect upon it. For me, intellect has

nothing to do with a composer's inspiration. Ah, that's what gets me sick when it comes to Schumann's work.

21. **G. M:** *In choosing your students' repertoire what criteria do you take into consideration?*

22. **E:** Ah, well, here you have hit the nail on the head! For me, it is very important to find the best choice for each individual. And I regard myself as having to 'hit the nail on the head' millions of times... [She laughs]. I know what to give to each learner. Let's say, I would never ask H to play a Brahms rhapsody. Not only because she does not possess the right hands for it, but it just doesn't suit her, because of her idiosyncrasies, her way of thinking, the way she goes about it or her whole attitude towards it. She cannot cope with that impressive and 'manly' style that Brahms demands. I also don't agree with teachers who have a uniform syllabus for all the students at every level, regardless of each one's abilities or preferences. There are pieces that have to be performed at every particular level but it doesn't mean that you can assign the very same work for everyone to play.

23. **G. M:** *When there is a compulsory piece what methods do you adopt if it doesn't suit your student, to help him get acquainted with it?*

24. **E:** This is the case where I do almost anything. This year, for instance, for the diploma they had assigned some Sisilianos pieces, as a compulsory subject. The majority of students refused to play them. Everybody was wondering how they could play them. In the end, they managed to learn them. To tell you the truth, one of my girl students, who objected more forcefully than the others, upset them all. One of the committee members could not recognise the piece. The girl had instilled musicality into it.

25. **G. M:** *What did you actually do to get such good results?*

26. **E:** I always leave children a little more on their own when it comes to a compulsory piece. I think 'well, as they have to perform in front of an audience, let them be carried away for a while'. I am very lenient with them when it comes to mistakes. I let them express themselves freely. Well, if they don't succeed in the goal they set themselves, then I have to intervene. I just don't let it become ridiculous. The girl I

was telling you about made a great success of it without my help. I said to her 'bravo, my dear R. Now you deserve it'. You see this is the only place where I observe each student's maturity, that is, what s/he has learnt with me, and see how a student on his own can make use of my teaching regarding the technique and the music, and turn a trifling piece of music into a successful one.

27. **G. M:** *As you said before, H was preparing for a concert. I would like to ask you what you actually do for the preparation of a performance?*

28. **E:** Even if I have to teach in the class just to enrich their repertoire, I always use the very same method, that is, if they are to play before an audience. This is the right way to learn a piece, I think. That is, how to study it and how they'd feel when they were in front of an audience. There must be some kind of psychological preparation. Well, this is the goal of a pianist; to play in front of an audience. We could never play with only the two of us. We bring everything to a climax, as if we were to play during a recital. That's what I believe. If they don't reach that point, then, I withdraw the piece they study.

29. **G. M:** *Regarding looseness, I noticed you paid particular attention to this excerpt. How much does that help in playing the piano?*

30. **E:** It's everything. I repeat: everything! Looseness comes from inside. I am convinced about it. If someone is stiff inside that comes out along with his playing. If you stiffen within yourself, you are definitely going to be stiff with your hands. H is used to lifting up her shoulders, as well. I usually say to her 'drop your shoulders'. Then, she immediately feels loose. As for me, unfortunately, although my teacher was very good, I didn't make a good start. When I went to Vienna they told me right away that I was not using my fingers at all! My fingers were directed to the keyboard through my arm movement. They forced me to study etudes by Hanon and Chopin for five hours a day, let's say in 49 tempo. Because I yearned to go high, I did it, although it was an ordeal that I had to go through. My Greek teacher was a top-class teacher, and particularly at the COA. It wasn't really his fault. It was probably my fault, but now, because I myself was really tortured in order to get it correct, I am fully aware of where hand stiffness comes from. I used to lift my shoulders, and as a result I was dead stiff. A dancer, a friend of mine, used to tell

me, 'you are stiff. I am going to show you the way to strengthen your muscles, so you can improve your body posture'. It was then, that I felt how stiff I was. I was born again when I realised this. This is why starting the wrong way made me realise how important it is to do it in the right way from the beginning. Now, I insist on getting the shoulders as well as the back loose right from the very first minute. It is obvious that you rely on the back to make you stand properly, but it is absolutely necessary not to stiffen it up. It's a hard task for a person to perform with stiffness. Whatever he sets his hands to, will sound 'wooden' as well. It is not enough to tell a child 'loosen up, loosen up!' How is he to know what this means? You just say, 'take a deep breath. Imagine that you are not doing anything, but relaxing. You start from nowhere, put your hands loosely on the piano. Just remember this as long as you play'. You must, of course, keep your fingers active. That's where your potential lies. They say that Richter had so much power at the tips of his fingers that he could pull along a whole piano. Well, all the energy is centred here. The arm and the shoulder play their parts independently. They must be at the same time fit, of course, without being stiff. That's why I am of the firm opinion that hand looseness is the basis of a good start towards the right expression. You can never produce a good sound, nor can you make your phrases melodic, if you haven't learnt to set your hands free.

31. **G. M:** *Would you like to add anything to this particular lesson?*

32. **E:** Ah, yes, look, I was instructing the girl in the elementary things because it was her first lesson on this piece. I am pleased, however, to say that whatever I asked her to do, she did. Perhaps I had to repeat the same things that appear in the excerpt many times. It is not enough to say a thing once, twice or even three times. To play a phrase, may be the most difficult thing. There are pianists who never learn that and play as if there were no phrases in the piece. I had some students who attended the chamber music course with one of the well-known teachers (but let me keep his name a secret). Well, he used to yell at them 'F-O-R-T-E!' One of my students used to say to me 'what? Forte? We haven't reached the point of forte so that I can play it in a forte tone. I have to complete the phrase and at the culminating point I have to apply forte'. Often a phrase may begin with forte. That doesn't mean that the composer wants the whole phrase to be in forte. If you start playing it forte, at the

culminating point you have to make it a lot more forte. Or you have to start piano in order to reach the forte gradually. It is not enough to play only what the score says. You have to look behind all these, that is, to what the composer and the whole piece of music means. Phrases are an integral part of music. It's not only Mozart's or Beethoven's property. Every musician uses phrases. We speak with phrases. A child has to know where a phrase begins and ends. He has to recognise the phrases and make them stand out. Otherwise, he can't play music.

33. **G. M:** *You also appeared to put an emphasis on the 'stand out' or 'exaggeration' as you characteristically defined it. What did you actually mean?*
34. **E:** I like attending seminars. I have learnt a lot from them. Once, I went to Moscow and attended not only concerts, but also sessions, to see how they teach music. Everything, in the end, changed within me. Russians have a completely different system. They don't play like Westerners. They play by moving their arms. Their arms direct them. The first time that I realised this was when a Russian pianist came to Athens and I noticed that her hands were 'flying'. I just thought that we play as if we were nailed to our seats. All Westerners play like this. We, too, have some very good pianists –I am going to tell you their names, but please, keep them a secret [She tells me their names] – who play nailed to their seats with their arm almost stuck to their ribs. Then, I decided to visit Russia to see how those things are taught there. Then I had my first students who were to take their diploma exams. Coming back, I said to them 'children we are going to change our technique right from the start'. One of them got the knack of it and he, himself, later on went to Moscow and he's still there. The other girl, who was a bit reserved, told me that she couldn't possibly change her technique on the eve of her diploma exams. No matter how hard I tried, she didn't change it. I asked one of my girl students, who was playing a Sonata by Schubert and had trouble with the first phrase, to play moving her arm away from her body and singing the last note feeling as if her hands were leading her towards this final note. As she did this, she immediately admitted 'you saved me. I couldn't bring it out in any other way. With the arm directing me I got it the way I wanted'. I changed my way of playing because I realised that they were playing better than we are. Just listen to a German and then to a Russian. Germans, of course, now have Russian teachers as well. That's why they may play well. In

Vienna again, my teacher was perfect and distinguished. Just to mention the fact that Argerich was one of my fellow students (!) will help you to imagine how hard I had to study in order to keep up with her. I have told you all these things to make you realise why I looked into it so intensively and ended up with what you asked me. Well, among all the things that I learned in Russia was that they exaggerate some things. When they played a Chopin etude, they played it a lot differently from my students here. Why is that? Because the Russians exaggerate things in the piano, in the forte, in the phrase and so on. That is, they make those things stand out clearly. Then, music comes out more brilliantly than intended and so, the audience will get the meaning of the music. It's not only for that, though. That's what musical expression is for. When the composer demands forte, he means expressiveness as well. Forte, but in a very sublime way, as if you were to play a pianissimo. That is, the windowpanes should be shattered but not disturb your hearing at all. Exaggerations are, however, necessary. 'Piano' must be heard. Crescendo must come out clearly and continue to the end. It has to reach the climax. That's why I insist on exaggerating, because if we don't get it at a slow tempo in the classroom, it will never come out at a fast tempo, or in front of an audience. It will come out half-done and hardly heard. At a slow pace everything has to be played correctly over and over again. Otherwise, it definitely won't come out. I can see that in my playing. If I haven't studied a piece very carefully and many times at a slow pace, I am too nervous when I perform it in front of an audience. It's a case of a person losing his spontaneity and being forced to think instead of expressing himself, which, in the end, is his target. Only with exaggeration at a slow pace will you be able to present at least half of it at the fast pace.

35. **G. M:** *I think that we can go on, if you haven't got anything to add.*

36. **E:** Yes, let's move on to M.

### **E3 M: BEETHOVEN, SONATA, OPUS 14, N. 1, 1<sup>ST</sup> PART, ALLEGRO**

37. **G. M:** *What were you trying to get out of this excerpt?*

38. **E:** I was simply trying to make her understand that piano sound should be heard as if it were coming from an orchestra. This can be so in any great composer's work



such as Beethoven's. The piano itself is a whole orchestra, and every pianist should respect the various shades of sounds of the instruments which the composer might have thought of. The pianist can imitate the way a cellist would have played, that is, in a deeply passionate way, or the way a violinist would have done so, as if he was singing, or make the sound crystal-clear in the way a wind instrumentalist can certainly do.

39. Bach composed fugues without giving any indication of the instrument they should be played on. Starting with reading Bach right away you realise what instruments he can be played on. One can get the idea from his phrases. A performer may be led astray and may play the sound of the phrase as if it has been presented by a wind instrument instead of a stringed one. Things were very lax at that time. Later on, however, in Chopin or Beethoven and the other great composers, orchestration came to the fore, so I believe that anyone can imagine what the composer wanted one to understand, what he aimed at when he wrote a phrase. At the end of the first part that M was playing, it becomes quite apparent what sound and instruments he had in mind at that time. The cello is one of those instruments. I believe that a pianist has to respect the various shades of sound that a composer would have thought of and dreamed of seeing performed on a piano.

40. In addition, M was playing very hard with her left hand, so the melody was actually overwhelmed. It is very important to make melody phrases heard, no matter what hand one uses to play them in that particular case. A pianist should bring out clearly where each phrase begins or ends and also know the points that he should start 'singing' for each piece. He cannot apply the same pressure on all parts. It would be pitiful.

41. **G. M:** *You put great emphasis, first of all, on some points that seemed to be hard as well as on slow studying since you have said the same thing to many other students as well. I'd like to ask you, if I may, generally, how you handle any technique problems that may crop up?*

42. **E:** I deal with them on an individual basis. As soon as I pick up a difficulty, I set out looking for the most suitable way of dealing with it, taking into account, of course, personal characteristics. If a student has studied the piece in accordance with the set

methods, such as study at a slow pace with both or separate hands, and has not managed it, then I do everything to find some other way. One of these is to advise him to use other fingers for the same notes, since scores often mention fingers that are not proper for each case. Fingering is, I believe, a very personal affair. Everything depends on the structure of one's hands. One person can do it well with the first, another with the fourth or the fifth finger. So it doesn't mean that I ask all my students to use the same fingers. Although we start from whatever is written in the scores, when I see that something doesn't suit them, then we co-operate in order to find other fingers and other ways of studying. I believe in a slow-pace study at such a tempo that you can comprehend the melody of the piece. The harmonic progression must be heard even in the slow pace study. It shouldn't be so slow that, finally, it becomes boring either. On the other hand, I firmly believe in the fast study. The slow one can strengthen your fingers. After it we separate each bar into four, for example, and every one of them tries to bring it up to the final tempo. We let our hand relax after a slight rush in each part. Every way of studying has to have its opposite. That is, if you study playing the notes in twos, as if the first note were a dotted one, then, you will have to do the second one dotted. I am convinced we shouldn't apply any methods at all to some particular parts of a piece. You have to start from the slow study, moving on to a medium one, and then end up with the fast one. Your hands shouldn't be stiffened when it comes to using the fast method. First of all, you play a tiny little phrase, then you will connect it to the next one and then to the third one, but in the meantime you'll have some pauses for relaxation. This is the only way that a student can get his hands loosened.

43. **G. M:** *You also appeared to demand from your students that they brood over what they are going to play and, at the same time, consider how those phrases can be joined to perfection. Would you comment on my observation?*

44. **E:** Every good performer would be careful with the point where the phrases are joined, so that a listener would not hear the next as something different, but as a natural continuity, as if it came straight from the previous phrase. One must be incorporated in the other, otherwise, it would sound unskilful and out of place. Recently, I heard a Greek pianist, who is regarded as competent, who, however, could not join the phrases. They were so clumsily connected together that it

appeared as if he didn't understand why one followed the other. A piece has to be heard complete like a unit. It is very important that all the students should be acquainted with it, that's why you saw me insisting on that.

45. **G. M:** *I noticed you playing the piece or singing at M's session as well as in many others, or moving your hands about as if you were an orchestra conductor. Is it something that you do consciously and if so, for what purpose?*

46. **E:** It may be one of my vices. I am very spontaneous. I sometimes even dance. When I hear something good I enjoy it and my joy comes out, but whenever something is wrong I react instinctively by singing it as it should have been heard. When I hear something that doesn't sound rhythmically right, I can get up and start dancing and then my students have fun. I say to them, 'sorry, I am not a good dancer, but this is the way it could be danced'. In every possible way, with the use of the body, or playing the piece on the piano myself, or in many other cases pressing their hands on the first note of the phrase, I only intend to show them the way a piece is played. Everything, however, depends on how musically one thinks. Being a pianist yourself, I am sure that you know that by working it out musically a piece becomes smooth in technique. You may be compelled to study something with regard to its technique, but generally, you have to study it in musical terms. Then you see, to your surprise, that it comes out better when it comes to technique. During the first lessons, I show them how musicality is achieved, what sound they have to produce, so that they can study the expressiveness of the piece.

47. There is a pianist from Vienna in Greece who shows his students all the time technique exercises. I was surprised when I heard this and said 'well, doesn't he ever reach musicality? He has to get there some time, because that's what the goal is'. He mainly teaches Hanon and etudes. I just cannot understand a musician never teaching music. Like some singing teachers that I have personally witnessed teaching exercises to their students and asking the pianist to show them the music. For me, being a music teacher is more important than just having knowledge of the technique. For me, they are not music teachers at all. They should be expelled from the teaching profession. They spoil the children since they don't instil musicality in them.

48. **G. M:** *I would like to ask you something else about M. Why, in your opinion of course, has she come to learn music?*

49. **E:** M began learning music as a form of literature. That is, she wanted to study music as well, besides all the other subjects. She liked it, of course, but she gradually found herself getting entangled in a mess of things. She got the certificate of Proficiency in English when she was fourteen and her certificate in French. She is on the lookout for a great variety of things besides music. It always has to do with parents, of course. I believe that Greek parents are generally rather vain and want their children to collect as many qualifications as possible. I agree, of course, with the idea of learning a foreign language, but for a child of fourteen to sit for a Proficiency exam goes too far. What can he do with it? Hang it up on the wall? She wants to accumulate knowledge and she is, on the whole, born to be a teacher. She is not an artist. By contrast, her little sister is an artist. She is only ten and she came to me in the lower class. There is a vast difference between them. M is a tiny little teacher. You tell her something and she'll do it right away. Music is not forced out of her. You understand? That's why I don't get along with such children. You know that I never felt like being a teacher. I feel that I am only a musician who wants her children to learn music. If I ever manage to do this, I'll be very happy. Not all of my students, of course, intend to learn to play music, but perhaps just to get another degree. I have a student who really yearns to be able to play the piano. It's the one I told you about a short while ago. The one who feels reserved about playing forte and expressing herself. It is very hard for a teacher to ward off such a prejudice. This is what I find really hard. Nothing else. In such cases I have to give them my full attention during the lesson to make them feel at home.

50. **G. M:** *Would you have anything to add?*

51. **E:** No, I am afraid I've said a lot. Let's move on.

**E4 L: PROKOFIEV, SONATA, OPUS 14, 1<sup>ST</sup> PART, ALLEGRO MA NON TROPPO**

52. **G. M.:** *As soon as you introduced me to L, you, at the same time, stressed that she is a talented girl who studies hard. Would you be kind enough to talk about L and say how much talent helps in learning the piano?*
53. **E:** Talent is a God-sent gift and helps a learner greatly. You work much better with someone who is a born musician and understands a lot more than anyone else. He can create a lot more. It is important when music comes out of him spontaneously without me having to work at it. On the other hand, teaching a talented person involves a lot of peculiarities since you need to bring the person down to earth. It is a kind of nuisance. L, however, is flexible and I can handle her. She is a girl who needs motivation. It may be because her religiousness may restrain her from bringing out her inner world. In this way you can mould her a lot more easily since she is ready, at any given moment, to accept any help that comes from above, from the teacher or even from her mother. So this is better for me teaching her than having to teach someone else who believes that whatever he knows is right. Once I had a student who was extremely talented, but was unbalanced in his study. He had his own obsessions. I had to try hard to persuade him about anything. When he first came to me he had been quite well taught by his previous teacher. He had, however, his own views on how a certain thing should be played. They were so strong that trying to convince him I got exhausted, really exhausted. I was really forced to use a lot of arguments to make him just listen to me. To cut a long story short, he was supposed to have come to me so that I could teach him some things. I had come to the point where I had to tell him that if he didn't want to learn the things that I intended him to, then he ought to drop out. I once also said to him, 'I may not be as talented as you are, but I know a few more things than you do, I have some experience and a lifetime spent studying and listening to sounds, and since you have come to me and appear to trust me, you are expected to respect my views'. It took me two years to persuade him. For me, teaching a talented person is sometimes a lot more difficult than teaching ordinary cases.

54. **G. M.:** *You appeared to change your behaviour towards each student. For example, when you saw that R was disappointed in some way, you seemed to do everything to encourage her. What comments would you make on that?*
55. **E:** You cannot teach all your students in the same way. We are not robots. We actually ought to give each of them the repertoire that suits his character and personality. I had given R Chopin's Fantasy. At first, she didn't study it. Some of the points didn't come out successfully, so she might have got disappointed because of that, or she might not have been in the mood to study it. Every time she used to ask me 'do you think I am capable of playing this piece? Will I make it?' I said to her 'I select the right pieces for every one. It's like going to the tailor to have something made according to your measurements. I give you a tailor-made suit. Do believe me, the piece suits you perfectly'. I can tell you that two or three months before sitting for her diploma exams she said to me 'you were right. It suits me just nicely and I like it very much'. When I managed to make her study it and she realised that it was one of her favourites, she was convinced. It took me almost one year to persuade her to study it. At her diploma exams everybody said how beautifully she had played the Fantasy. Even Mrs Bakopoulou [a famous Greek pianist] told me that. And you know, of course, how well she plays Chopin. Even Arvanitakis [a good piano teacher] told me that. I am telling you all these things to make you realise that, not only do I know in advance what suits every student, but I also know how to treat him in line with his character. I cannot get cross with a child like L, who is sensitive, because I know that, whatever I tell her to do, she is going to do right away. She won't behave like a few other students. I cannot treat all children in the same way. L said to me on the phone the other day 'ah, what can I say to you! Although I haven't been studying much this year, you never got cross, so I got over this stage. If you had behaved in any other way I might have dropped out of piano lessons'. Quite a few times, because I have been teaching for many years and have got rather tired of having children without any talent, but am still compelled to teach them the piano, I get to my wit's end. You see, I am not an English music teacher whose nervous system is so strong that, whatever the students do, I can bear. I suffer and I show it. And this is very hard because they are affected by it. P, one of my students, said to me 'you did not treat me as if you were a pedagogue', and I replied, 'but I am a musician, like you. I am not, of course, going

to beat you up, but when I have told you the same thing about forty times and you haven't studied it, I'll end up using a harsher method'. I usually try to be patient and look for solutions even if it is necessary to say the same things forty times over.

56. **G. M.:** *As for L, what I noticed was that you wanted to keep her morale up. You told her to set herself free.*

57. **E:** Yes, that is so, since she is a musically inclined child, and she is best at slow pieces that need a lot of thought. If a child does not know the notes of a piece very well and has not thought about how to get as much as possible out of it, I cannot be inspired so much. In the Sonata that she was playing, the slow part is very hard. It is really a piece like a dirge at a funeral, the sound of the steps following the coffin, some pathetic moments where the dirge becomes a lot softer, and some dramatic moments that show that the dead man was a hero. What I mean is, there are so many variations although everything has a dramatic sound. I just sat down and explained to her every phrase. I said 'let's say that one voice is like a sigh, the other one is as if it is saying, 'but why has that man been killed?' whereas the third one is as if it is mourning. One is saying one thing while the other one, at the same time, another. So I asked her 'how are you going to show them if you do them the same way? You have to feel them like four men, each of whom mourns in a different way'. I told her those things and in the end she said 'I hadn't understood the piece. Now, I like it'. You have to inspire your student. I cannot myself, however, right from the beginning be inspired and express all those things. The child has to challenge me in the way he is playing, and then things unknown to me come out of me as clear as crystal.

58. **G. M.:** *As far as I am concerned we can go on to the next excerpt unless you have something to add.*

59. **E:** No, let's carry on with R.

#### **E5 R: CHOPIN, SONATA, FANTASIE, OPUS 49, 1<sup>ST</sup> PART**

60. **G. M.:** *What would you say about R and this particular excerpt?*

61. **E:** R is a little angel. She needs to be encouraged. Her potential is very great, but she has got a sensitive character, that's why I keep on telling her that she can make it.
62. **G. M.:** *Yes, I did notice that and, by the way, I'd like to ask you how important it is for the teacher to find the best way of encouraging students. How would you, generally, describe a good teacher?*
63. **E:** First of all, a teacher must be keen on his students' affairs and, at the same time, show it to them. I don't mean that he should be like a Saint and forgive anything wrong they do. If he does that, they may think that they do everything perfectly and would hardly ever try to correct themselves. On the other hand, you should never point out to them every mistake they make. You might mention that something was wrong but he probably hadn't understood it or he hadn't really studied it properly. At the same time, you should tell him that he played the other phrase a lot better than this one. I cannot tell him that he did everything wrong. I believe in rewarding a success right away, as well as correcting a mistake step by step. A teacher has to be a psychologist as well. J, for instance, needs encouragement all the time, but she needs also to be pushed forward. I cannot do the same with R, though, or with L either. As for R, who for that particular lesson had got so down-hearted, stiffened-up, and stressed about how she would play the pieces, what else could I have possibly done than just encourage her? To be honest, anyone sitting for a diploma is at the most difficult stage in studies. They have a two-hour programme to go through. Then most of the learners have some difficulties and are so stressed that they wish they could stop playing the piano or postpone their exams. If I then tell them, 'ah well, you cannot do this' they will naturally run away! It is then that I say to them, 'don't be afraid. It's only now that you think you cannot do it. After two or three lessons, you will be a winner'. You get me? It's not the right time to point out all their mistakes. I just work out within me their feelings and then is the time when a good word should be said to them. It's like 'injecting' courage into them, a kind of narcotic, I must say. I cannot, however, do the same in every case. In some cases, I have to yell at them, whereas I have to wait for others to mature and let the music be brought out without any tense signs of stiffness. If at that very moment, I shout at them, then they'll harden up further. If again someone else is not interested or a bit



lazy and is satisfied with the quality of his playing, then my screaming out at him may get some results. When I see him very tense, if I shout, I will commit murder. Well, in conclusion, I would say that a piano teacher has to be a very good psychologist as well.

64. **G. M.:** *During R's lesson you seemed to regard the pedal as very important and talked about some kind of 'pizzicato' pedal. What did you actually mean?*

65. **E:** There are a variety of ways of using the pedal. There is not only the 'legato' pedal. A lot of learners step on it, as if they had a duck's foot. I tell them 'you are not a duck, are you? Then, take your foot off the pedal now and then'. There is the 'tremolo' pedal. Let's suppose that in this sonata Beethoven had written in the score one pedal movement for the whole phrase. A piano as an instrument of that time was quite different from a modern one. Now you may press on it, let it go and press on it again, or you can use 'tremolo' pedal and get a vague sense of its existence. There is also the 'staccato' pedal. You see, there are a lot of uses for a pedal.

66. But in this sonata, R really made me suffer with the use of the pedal. She made a wrong movement although Beethoven had written everything there in the score and whatever we had to change I had jotted down on it. She never managed to use it properly even during her final exams.

67. **G. M.:** *If I got you right, you say a teacher can, at some points, intervene in a composer's demands shown in the score. If so, to what extent?*

68. **E:** Look, often there are mistakes in the editions that the children get. I believe that when it comes to classical music we have to respect the original editions. Most of the Italian editions, for instance, have made a lot of insertions into Bach, Mozart or Beethoven pieces. They even change notes. This is something that I really loathe. When Beethoven writes something and you see it on the manuscript, who are you to think that you can improve it? I regard it as impertinence and disrespect, not to mention crime. Many performers are like Garoufalis [a famous Greek pianist and the Director of the COA] who pays so much attention to whatever is written in the scores that quite often he studies first only that, away from the piano.

69. **G. M.:** *Do you really believe in studying away from the piano?*

70. **E:** Yes, I do, in the sense that the brain is trained by this exercise, but not the hands. Finally, you have to play it. If you have your brain trained, then you learn the pieces a lot more thoroughly and keep in touch with the composition. It's not, however, enough to study it as a text. You need to listen to it as well. Studying away from the piano suits a lot of people but I myself believe in the slow study that gives you the opportunity to do two things at the same time: think and listen. The majority of pianists adopt this kind of study. A teacher should find the best one that would really help his students.
71. **G. M.:** *In most of the sessions I was present at, you seemed to change distinctively according to the child and the piece you had to teach.*
72. **E:** Yes, I pay a lot of attention to that. You know, all children are not the same. You must live with a few hard facts; that is, some children are not capable enough of understanding you right from the start. There are times when age plays an important role. Even so, at every age, at any class level, and for any child, I always try to teach the piece to be played as professionally as possible. As if a great pianist was playing it, regardless of whether the piece was for the lower level or not.
73. **G. M.:** *In addition to all those differences mentioned above, could you pick out any variations of attitudes among your students in the conservatories that you teach?*
74. **E:** Yes, definitely. All the other conservatories are a lot more lenient than the COA. They don't have this kind of compulsory approach 'you have to play this piece or you have to play scales'. In other words, there is a harsh discipline and a kind of oppression in the COA. This might be good, since it might compel you to do many things, but it might finally bridle you so much that you feel inclined to give it up. In all the other conservatories, teachers and students take it easy. Scales are not considered to be so important. In the exams we ask for the easy scales. We have to compromise. As for your question, unfortunately, there are not many good students in most of the other conservatories. Children attending those schools of music think that things are easy and they can get a music diploma without great effort. There you cannot be demanding because there is the 'businessman' behind you who insists that 'we cannot let him drop out'. That is what I hate. You get paid by the month in the COA regardless of the number of students you have, whereas in the others you get

paid for each student. But I couldn't care less as far as payment is concerned. In each case, I do my work as well as I can. Where we seem to be very lenient, however, is in cases where, although some children appear to have no future, we still let them study with us as long as they wish. In the COA they would expel them after a while. Let me add something. Recently, even in the COA, they have decided no longer to expel mediocre students directly, as they did in the past, because they also need the cash. In all the others, you never do that! You keep on being patient and doing whatever you can to make the student learn something. That's the difference. There certainly is a difference! Since, unfortunately, there is money involved. As for me, I am not going to change my way of teaching. I simply cannot send anyone away because he is not capable of learning. I will try hard to get something good out of him. That's the difference. Do you get me?

75. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to add?*

76. **E:** We have already said a lot, haven't we? Let's move on to another child.

#### **E6 J: LISZT, ETUDE DE PAGANINI, N. 6, QUASI PRESTO**

77. **G. M.:** *What exactly was your aim regarding this piece?*

78. **E:** This girl not only falls short in rhythm or musicality, particularly for this excerpt, but also in whatever piece she tries her hand at. She might possess some kind of musicality but it is so hidden that it doesn't seem to come to light clearly. That is, whenever she does her home assignment, for the first time, I get the feeling that she is like a fish out of water. Then, I ask myself 'what can I do about it? How am I to teach this person music?' Every time we have to start like this.

79. **G. M.:** *She, nevertheless, seems to be fond of music.*

80. **E:** Oh, yes, you are right. She is. So much does she love it that I often wish that a talented child would be the same. Let's suppose, for instance, that P had the same passion as J has. I have asked this girl to drop out more than three times, and the Board of Directors of the COA has asked her many times. The latter looks as if it has been influencing her for two or three times since she got the lowest mark, that is, five out of ten. When she sat for her Intermediate entrance exams, the Director of

studies said, 'I'll be damned if she ever makes the grade'. However she took it after two attempts with the low mark of seven out of ten. In the second year, the Director told me again to ask her to drop out, but I made him change his mind and let the girl stay with me for another year 'under suspension'. When she was about to sit for her Higher entrance exam he said to me, 'suppose we let her through; what is going to become of her?' and I said, 'ah well, perhaps she might get a degree somehow'. Then, he said, 'you think that a degree is easy to get, do you?' 'Ah well then, let's make her drop out', I said. 'Oh God, let her move on to the next level. Because if we keep on expelling students we'll end up with one tutor having as students only the rest of the personnel!' He let her stay on because I insisted. I said to him, 'she is very industrious and has a passion for music. Let her have a degree', and he said, 'all right, let her pass', and marked her with seven out of ten.

**81. G. M.:** *Do you personally believe that musicality or rhythm, if not instinctive, can be learnt?*

**82. E:** They are not the only things that this particular girl is not competent in. You can see right away that she is so untalented. She plays like a robot. No matter how hard I try to get some fair kind of music out of her that really makes me satisfied, I never seem to make it. Most of the time I keep on compromising. This cannot go on any longer. On top of that, in this excerpt I got upset with her pauses, her expression, and generally with the fact that she seems not to be really interested in what she is playing. Since she has been my student from an early age, she has acquired a good technique; her fingers really fly and possess the proper strength; she plays the notes correctly; she is intelligent; she can understand the meaning of what she is playing. Music, nevertheless, is not just a matter of understanding; you have to feel it; it has to mean something to you, and you must be able to convey that meaning. This she either doesn't understand – or gives you the impression that she doesn't – or else it could even be that she feels some sort of fear about it.

**83. G. M.:** *You definitely have made a great effort to help her to understand the composer's deeper notions so that you could aid her interpretation. At one point, for instance, you said to her, 'this is not a military order'. Do you think that the meaning of a piece is something that can be taught?*

84. E: Yes, of course, I do. As regards J, you could never imagine what means I've used to help her to reach this stage of playing. I always try hard to inspire her. Let me tell you the story of her studies. That is, where she started from and how far she has gone. In the Higher level in the first year she got eight out of ten. She had played a concerto by Mozart. In the second year she got nine out of ten! In the third year Mrs V. [a member of the Board of examiners in the COA] said to me, 'I wouldn't be surprised if she gets her diploma'. This is how high J got there only on the basis of her good technique. She worked hard on her technique. Then, I said to her 'oh, no, that's not possible. She will never make it. Let her sit for the degree, and then we will wait and see'. And fancy her getting a degree with distinction! Yes, she did! Congratulations are due to both of us. She could do things because of her strong will and hard study, but it was something that no member of the committee could really detect. In the degree they all unanimously gave her ten out of ten! Only Mrs M. [a member of the examinations committee] added, 'let her stop here. Don't encourage her to take the diploma'. But J insisted on going on. I said to her, 'why don't you come to the other conservatory where things are a lot more lenient?' But she started to cry. 'Why do you degrade me? It feels as if you are trying to expel me', and I said to her 'I recommend this because I want to make you feel a lot more relaxed, but since you want to stay here and get whatever you can get, I have no problem'. Last year, when she played a concerto by Grieg, everyone told me that she played it a lot better than the other three students who got their degrees with distinction playing the same concerto. She was the best of all. Can you imagine that? That was what encouraged me to let her continue. I am thinking of giving her this Sonata by Schubert that does not involve a lot of passion. It needs a lot of meditating. As for Beethoven, she'll have to apply musicality to the piece. We began practising with Waldstein! She also wants to play the concerto by Grieg. Oh, she made a success out of the first part, but in the last one how is she to play it, as it is burning with passion? How am I going to make myself the 'burning bush?', in order to inspire her? The task of getting out whatever good a child has within him is the hardest and most perplexing for any teacher. If someone is extrovert, what you may sometimes have to do is to make him restrain himself from exuberant playing. If he is an introvert personality you have to use a pick and shovel to dig it out. J needs this; me digging up all the time. Digging. Digging. Oh, God knows for how long. [She

laughs]. Thank God, I haven't got anything else to dig up for my dear J... Let's move on.

**E7 N: BEETHOVEN, SONATA, OPUS 109, 2<sup>ND</sup> PART, ANDANTE**

85. **G. M.:** *I'd like to ask you about this excerpt. You listened so carefully without interrupting N during her performance, and then at the end passed some comments on her playing. Is it something that you do for a specific purpose, or because she was at the stage just before the diploma exams?*

86. **E:** Look, we have worked hard on this sonata. Besides, I have told her a lot of things about it. I had corrected all her mistakes and let her work on it on her own. So I wanted to see what she had done on her own. If I had interrupted her and pointed out to her her mistakes in musicality, I wouldn't have understood the way she worked. I just wanted to see her way of thinking as well as her ability to judge. That is, to what extent she is strict with herself, what points she was especially careful with or not, and then we would work on all of them, after, of course, having listened to them very carefully.

87. There is, on the other hand, another case where I listen to the pieces when they have reached their final stage – a kind of dress rehearsal – before an exam or a concert performance, to get them acquainted with the difficulties they will actually be confronted with during that long-lasting and wearying exam before the committee or before an audience.

88. As for N, we hadn't come to such a stage in this particular lesson. Later on, we managed to do it. In this excerpt, we were at a stage where we worked on the pieces in detail. I have already taught her many technique methods, musical or expressive things about every variation that she has to do, and she has studied them on her own, so we have reached the point where I go through what she has done. It wouldn't have been proper to interrupt her again and again. I'll have to wait to see the results of her work and then tell her my opinion about it, correcting at the same time any mistake she might have made. You understand?

89. It is not always the same in all the phases. You must have noticed that in some other sessions I did interrupt and correct the students who were doing their first lessons on the piece, as they didn't know even the most basic points. As far as N is concerned, I have explained them to her and she has worked hard on them without my help. As soon as I realised that she hadn't understood them all, I had to go back to the start again. In music, you have to repeat again and again even the elementary points. You usually say 'why is this note like this?' or 'you have to play this phrase like this too'.
90. **G. M.:** *Yes, that's true. At one moment you said to her, 'you have to study this thing as if you had never done it before. To start all over again from scratch, although you might have reached the final stage!' What did you mean exactly?*
91. **E:** Look, N has a lot of weaknesses. First of all, although she got her degree at the 'National' conservatory, she had hardly ever played difficult pieces. They would ask her to play according to what suited her hands, which seem to be very small. In addition to that, since she possesses some musicality, they would ask her to play slow pieces, not fast ones, so that she could improve her technique to the point where it should have been. You see, there they are not as strict as they are at the COA. After her entrance exam at the COA, although she had a degree from the 'National', they placed her in the second class of the Higher level (fancy that!) and undertook the difficult task of teaching her technique right away. She hadn't even played Czerny, scales and such things. You understand? She didn't even know the most essential things in music.
92. She worked very hard. She is persistent and very industrious. But all those weaknesses deterred her in her studies. I even asked her to play exercises, to improve her finger-stretching, and she is capable of covering a distance of ten notes on the keyboard now. She could not even play an octave. Whenever she tried it out, we could hear other notes as well. Ah well, she has made a great effort, but because she hasn't got a deep musical background, her weaknesses become apparent. You see, no structure of any kind can stand erect without good foundations. To tell you the truth, I can just imagine what an ordeal it will be for me when she plays for her diploma. Not to mention the fact that, although she was supposed to sit for the exam in January, she didn't because she had pulled a muscle in her attempt to better her

technique. I am really at a loss because, although she has brought her pieces to a very good level of attainment, I know quite well that she doesn't feel happy with the fast pieces. I doubt whether she is going to get the knack of them. I am rather stressed with N, really I am.

93. **G. M.:** *Has she made any progress since I last saw her?*

94. **E:** Since the time when we began her diploma programme, she has made great progress in technique and musicality and has managed to get to know a lot of things. Studying a variety of pieces in the right way has really matured her. She is talented and industrious. She just has to get over her technical drawbacks. After my diploma exam I myself was hardly satisfied with my technique and began to study Mozart's simple things as well as Bach's pieces at the Intermediate level! That helped me a lot as, when you are in the Higher class, you hardly ever play those 'simple' works of music. Actually you are not permitted to, although I regard them as extremely useful. I once had a student in the second class of the Higher level with great potential and he played a sonata by Haydn for his exams. A member of the examination committee at the COA still keeps on pestering me with the question, 'do you remember that at one time you asked a student to play Haydn at the Higher level?' and I would answer, 'won't we ever in our lives play Haydn?' and she replied, 'he can play him later on, can't he?', so I asked, 'why shouldn't he play him now? Do we regard Haydn as too easy?' This is something I cannot stand.

95. N now not only lacks those basic things, but I'm sorry to say, she is not courageous enough to play before an audience, even though she played quite well in the preliminary diploma exams.

96. **G. M.:** *Are there preliminary exams before the final ones for the diploma?*

97. **E:** Oh, yes, for some time now, especially in the COA, such exams have been held prior to the final exams because there are children who cannot compete with the diploma's demands. Then they would have made themselves and their teachers a laughing stock if they had asked for the presence of the Board of examiners.

98. **G. M.:** *As far as I know, preliminary exams seem to be a must, because, if you fail in the final exams, you cannot take them again.*



99. **E:** Yes, that is true. That goes for every school of music. Failing once means you never get a diploma. For N the preliminary exams seemed to be the right thing, in order to get her over her fears. I want her to become courageous no matter what. Often I adopt the policy of praising her a lot more than I should really, just to instil self-confidence and courage in her. There are learners who wouldn't care a fig whatever you say to them, and go on without being affected by it. For N, as well as J, you have to keep on keeping up their morale. Of course, there are things that you have to bear in mind, such as what you are supposed to give a learner, how much of it and of what quality.

100. It's not only the teacher's work that must be taken into account, but here in Greece we have the problem of the schools of music themselves. There are, of course, a large number of them to work for, but, unfortunately, most of them are not of a good standard. I had a lot of offers of work, but as soon as I discovered their low quality, I turned them down. Who was I to co-operate with? You understand, of course, that a working environment plays a great part. That is, if you do your job quite well, but your colleagues are incompetent, you cannot feel at home and get any kind of competition. Not to mention the fact that you can hardly ever produce competitive work. You see, one person alone cannot start a revolution. There must be a lot more. So at first I never felt like a music teacher. Then a feeling grew within me that whatever I studied and learned I wanted to give out to others. So I decided to go to the COA and stay there permanently. I submitted an application, of course, but they didn't take me on at that time. Later on, when they needed more teachers, they did.

101. Once, I was asked by the 'Synchrono' conservatory to work there. They assured me that they were going to do some serious work, so I accepted their offer. I have never worked for any other employers, as nobody else's work policy seemed to satisfy my basic needs. Money was not my only pursuit in life. I always wanted to offer good teaching and have colleagues that I could feel comfortable with. Where could I find all those things? Could you tell me? Is there one that you could recommend? Even the ...[She just names one well-known private conservatory in Athens] is not worthwhile. I know that its popularity has fallen a lot. Is there one that's worth its reputation? Well, I wouldn't want to work for any of them. Besides,

in the COA and the other one that I am still working for I do really feel at home with the whole of the professional personnel. The director appreciates my potential and is fair with me. He accepts my recommendations and suggestions. I feel that whatever I regard as right is most of the time adopted. As for my colleagues, I have no problem at all, so I feel very comfortable there. I don't like amateurism and, unfortunately, that's what is prevalent in most of the other conservatories. To tell you the truth, it is not just a coincidence that N is deprived of the essential knowledge about piano playing.

102. **G. M.:** *Do you want to comment on N's lessons or shall we go on to some other general questions?*

103. **E:** I would just like to tell you that, at some point, if she keeps on studying like this, she will get over all her weaknesses. She has to try a lot harder and, on top of that, she should start to pluck up courage, so that she can play as well as she is able to, not only in her lessons, but before an audience too. That's all I have to say about N and her lesson, but if you think that you have some further general questions to ask, please do so.

#### GENERAL QUESTIONS

104. **G. M.:** *Since you are not only a piano teacher but also a sight-reading teacher, I would like to ask you how much you believe in sight-reading as an additional help in learning to play the piano.*

105. **E:** It is very useful, because it helps you to overcome the first difficulties. I have a girl student who is about to sit for her degree exam. She took about two months to learn one of her pieces and still kept on performing it at a slow pace, but now that she has started attending the sight-reading course, I have realised why it took her so long. She tortures me just going through a sight-reading piece. She takes an hour for a line and then goes back again to correct it. I now realise how weak her reading of a score is. Looking at J's case, I can see that, although she is untalented, her perception of sight-reading is marvellous. I was really astonished because, you see, some talented children have no inclination towards sight-reading at all. I asked her then, 'how come you have such ease with sight-reading? Please tell me. I want to

know.’ ‘Let me tell you’, she said. ‘Every time you give me a new book, just for curiosity’s sake, I play it from beginning to end, so I get used to reading notes at ease’. That is why she has had no trouble with any notes at all.

106. For me, it is very important for a pianist or any musician to play a variety of things, not just one piece for the whole academic year. It’s obvious, of course, that sooner or later you are going to play that piece well. Most of the teachers, however, ask their students to learn only pieces for their exams, so they can play them well. I don’t think this is right. I am in favour of children playing more pieces of music than the ones they are going to be examined on. Thus they can get fully familiar with such things as reading the scores, comprehension and piece appreciation. Training in sight-reading helps towards a faster learning of the pieces assigned and also facilitates further studies.

107. **G. M.:** *Now, as for the teacher-learner relationship, how would you interpret it?*

108. **E:** A piano teacher should not be hard on a child because, if he is, he might induce him to give up his studies. He must be lenient with him and find the best way to suit each case. Besides, he should take a serious interest in the learner’s personal problems, which sometimes become the reason for a student’s attitude towards study. A very close relation helps both, but most of all the student, to be successful in what they are doing.

109. **G. M.:** *I noticed that you seem to be very hard on yourself and quite often wonder why something did not go on well, because you think you were responsible for it.*

110. **E:** I always keep a critical attitude towards myself. There are nights when I cannot sleep a wink, since a student of mine did not satisfy me during the session as much as I would have expected him to. It is true that I am really tormented whenever I get worse results than the ones I had expected.

111. **G. M.:** *Keeping a critical attitude towards yourself was quite apparent during the sessions I was present at, as well as when you told me that at one time in your career you changed your ‘school’ of technique.*

112. **E:** Look, remaining stagnant spells death. ‘A rolling stone never gathers moss’ they say, don’t they? I do admit that I make mistakes, which naturally have to be corrected and I am always willing to learn more. I don’t know anything really! I asked G, you know, the one I told you attended music courses in Moscow, to lecture at a seminar to my students. I said to him, ‘please go ahead and teach the children, since you now know more than I do. Come on! Come on! Teach them!’ He stared at me like a stunned mullet! I am surprised at the things they learn in Moscow. In addition to piano lessons they attend so many other courses relating to playing the piano that you would think they had done two University courses.
113. **G. M.:** *Is there a special teaching course?*
114. **E:** Yes, there is a special class. Students have to attend Psychology and Pedagogy courses, which I regard as musts. In a general sense, as G told me, even in the Harmony course a student is shown the way to study or analyse a piece. Now this student of mine tells me that he can learn a piece in a ‘jiffy’! If you are capable of analysing a piece in every detail it is only too obvious that you will learn it quite easily. Do you have anything else to ask me?
115. **G. M.:** *No, not really, since I have asked you everything I wanted to. Thank you very much for your kind co-operation.*
116. **E:** I thank you, too. You see, I am still on the look out and our co-operation has helped me to look deep within myself even more. Every time you asked me about something, I wondered in the end if I could have told you something else. I think that looking for further information helps a lot. It helps you move forward. I still believe that I don’t know much. I don’t regard myself as a model teacher. On the contrary. I can tell you that I respect my students so much that I am always on the alert not to make a mistake, and every time I become conscious of the fact that I haven’t done as much as I should have, I feel my conscience pricking me. I always try to improve myself. P’s remark that I am not a good pedagogue has cost me a lot. Since then I have kept on asking him, ‘my dear P, how can you ever forgive me?’ A music teacher’s responsibility is very great. You see, as I see it, music has to offer a lot to mankind. A surgeon friend of mine once confessed to me that, if he had learnt music, he would have been a much better surgeon. I am convinced that the mission

of music has no limits. Learning a musical instrument takes you beyond the boundaries of music. It helps a person in any course of life he finally follows.

117. **G. M.:** *Once again I'd like to thank you very much for your co-operation.*

118. **E:** I thank you too and wish you great success.

## 'F'S INTERVIEW

This sixth interview took place in Athens. 'G.M.' is Georgia Markea (the interviewer). 'F' is a name given to the teacher for reasons of anonymity.

### F1 M1: FANNY WATERMAN AND MARION HAREWOOD, RICREAZIONI MUSIC PIANO LESSONS, 1<sup>ST</sup> BOOK, N. 5, VIOLIN AND CELLO

1. **G. M.:** *What exactly are you trying to find out in this excerpt?*
2. **F:** I was trying to make him play the phrases legato and be more rhythmic. I usually let them get an idea of what the piece is about. Afterwards I play it myself so they can hear how it should have been done. Then I play it in a variety of ways and ask them to specify the way they liked it best, and they say this or that. Then again, I ask them the reason why. In this particular case the little boy had to play a legato with his right hand and I told him that the left one shouldn't be affected because the other was playing legato. I connect this to speech. Legato is like ordinary speech. You see we don't speak in disconnected syllables like 'al-ways an-swer my que-stions please'. Consequently, when we play the piano, one thing follows another and what we want to be heard is a complete phrase. We must know its beginning and end. We should know where its phrase begins and where it ends, since the small pieces particularly have very short phrases. You play a tiny little phrase and then another one and then go back again to the first one and through this procedure we learn little by little the dynamics as well.
3. **G. M.:** *You have answered some of the questions that I intended to ask you later. I was really surprised at the fact that you let your students take the initiative and express their own opinion. During one of M1's lessons that was quite apparent. I*

*would like to ask you whether you are strict with yourself before or after the lesson and to what extent you are satisfied with your teaching.*

4. **F:** When at home I am always concerned about some particularly special cases, such as when a learner has to perform at a concert, or when a boy cannot get the results required no matter how hard we both try. Then I think them over and look into them trying to find the best way of dealing with them. Then we have to arrange an extra lesson again in order to see what went wrong. In beginners' cases I don't need to think about it outside the classroom. Besides, with parents I can talk over the difficulties we have met. As I have had students from other teachers I am fully aware of what they are interested in, which is, in short, just playing the right notes. They think that by playing the right notes they, at the same time, play the piece well. I tell them, 'just imagine that you had to recite a poem'; and right away I recite a poem in a fast and monotonous tone. Then, I ask them, 'did you like it? Are you satisfied with what you heard?' Soon afterwards I recite it as it should have been said, that is in a very expressive, clear voice, stressing the most important points of the verse. So they can understand that how you play the notes is more important than just playing them. I always maintain that music is not only about playing the right notes. There are phrases which begin and end and they are not the same. This can help them to memorise the piece at a later stage and at the same time enjoy what they finally do.
5. **G. M.:** *They are students who started off with other teachers and now continue with you. How much does this affect your teaching?*
6. **F:** It all depends on who their previous teachers were. I have a number of good students who already had the right body posture and hand position, and whatever comes out of their performance is very good and they are conscious of what they are actually doing. I have, on the other hand, had some students who have associated the note 'me', for example, with the third finger – I am talking about very small children – and who unfortunately have unformed hands. Such cases are difficult to deal with, trying to mend whatever is wrong with them. You see they are used to taking everything at their ease so it is very hard to instil in them a serious attitude towards music. They are always inclined to think, 'I just want to play, no matter how badly I do it'. With this mentality it is actually very hard to improve their

performance as they have learnt to play wrong. How on earth can you make them follow a new direction that seems to lead them to a lot of boring work? For them, the easiest thing to do is to play it as you like and at random, and only pick up a piece as long as you enjoy yourself. They are the very same children who tend, after hearing a melody, to try it out on the piano. And they might say to themselves, 'look how well I played it', not caring an iota about the position of their hands on the piano. On such occasions I just don't take it to heart, because I say to myself, 'ah well, he really enjoyed playing it and listening to it'. When it comes to pieces prepared for a concert at the conservatory or for home study I always try to put everything in the right position.

7. **G. M.:** *As I noticed, you spend quite some time with their hands. Even when you don't talk about it, you try to manoeuvre their hands yourself.*
8. **F:** I'm fully convinced that the hand position plays an important role in how one is going to perform later. It will help a lot. When they have to play an arpeggio, which requires the thumb to be ready to play, they have it hanging out of position. At a later stage, when they come across a variety of such movements, if they have formulated the proper hand position, they will get great help in their attempt to perform in a better way.
9. **G. M.:** *Yes, at some point you said to M1, and I quote, 'how are you going to play later on in a faster tempo when now you have your hands in such a state?'*
10. **F:** Yes, I insist on that because they usually play a note, letting the weight of their hand fall on it, and the rest of the hand is completely out of position. That is, the rest of the fingers are out of control.
11. **G. M.:** *As you do a number of things at the same time, such as singing, counting or conducting, I was wondering whether it is something conscious or unconscious.*
12. **F:** To be honest, it comes out spontaneously, but one thing that I do consciously is singing. Besides, I ask my students to sing so that they stop associating their fingers with some particular notes. If they sing whatever they are playing, then they free themselves and express the music in a better way. At the preliminary level I very

consistently insist on that. So I sing rather out of a tendency to get something. So we all sing and count together.

13. **G. M.:** *I've got a simple question about M1: why do you think that he is attending piano lessons?*

14. **F:** I believe he is doing that because his father once took up piano lessons but gave them up. So he thinks it would be a good thing for his child to study the piano, as most of the parents do with their children. Because they themselves started their studies very young and did not manage to get anywhere, it's, you see, like a dream that they were never able to make come true, or it could be that one of their grandparents or someone in the family played the piano, or for some other inexplicable reason, but not because the child himself has decided to do so. M1 is only six, so it's very hard for him to decide on that matter. He may, on the other hand, have some friends who play some pieces on the piano that he is fond of, and that could be a motive for him. Mums and dads are the ones who usually take the initiative towards this choice.

15. **G. M.:** *What are your expectations for M1 within two or three years?*

16. **F:** First of all, I would like him to find pleasure in whatever he is doing; to be satisfied with it; to enjoy performing at a concert, such as, for instance, the one he will be in this week; and to love music. I am not sure if he will carry on with it, and besides, it doesn't mean much, of course. You see, his parents are very cultured people. His father is a doctor and his mother a chemist. So they are seeking a better quality of life for their son. It is their expressed opinion that music is worth studying since it makes life beautiful.

17. M1, on top of that, is an excellent student at school. He always asks questions and listens very often to elders. He kept on asking questions. You remember that, don't you? So then, let him enjoy whatever he is doing, and whether he wants to continue his studies or not remains to be seen. It's so early. He has just started piano lessons and he is quite good. Mind you, he has attended the Junior course [a special course in 'Philippos Nakas' for very little children]. He had learnt the notes there and then came to me. We did not start from doh-rah, but from the hand position. The 'Junior course' on the one hand is good, as long as you have someone at your side to guide



you for the hand position or anything else. Most of the children from the 'Junior course' come to me with their hands out of control. They learn in some way to press the notes on the keyboard, but you have to make them take up the right body posture. That's what you asked me a short while ago. It is very important who a student's previous teacher was.

18. My daughter attends this 'Junior course', but she has not only had some experience in listening, but also attended live piano performances by me or my students. So her hands are properly trained. There was no reason for me to order her about. Whenever she makes a mistake I correct it right away. Whenever a parent has no kind of musical knowledge, it cannot be the same as with my daughter. Well, after the three-year 'Junior course' elapses, I have to start everything all over again right from scratch.

19. **G. M.:** *Since you have graduated, as well as worked, at the 'Conservatory of Athens' and now you work at both private conservatories at the same time, what conservatory would you enrol your daughter in?*

20. **F:** Ah, for me, it's the teacher that counts, not the conservatory; either at the 'Conservatory of Athens' or 'Philippos Nakas'. No teacher from the 'Conservatory of Athens' who is regarded as the best would ever like to teach at 'such and such' (excuse my French!) conservatory. It all comes down to who your teacher is. Most times my students tell me that they have come to 'Nakas' for particular reasons, and I reply, 'never say that', because the basic question is whether the teacher does his task properly or not. The same goes for all state schools. It doesn't matter what school you go to. A friend of mine sent her child to a very good school, but not to a good teacher. So you see, it's better to know who you entrust your child's education to. Of course, each conservatory has its own rules and regulations. They say 'we do this, we offer this, we demand that, we have such and such a curriculum' and, naturally, the 'Conservatory of Athens' seems to be the strictest of all. Forty five days prior to the entrance examinations for the Messi ['Middle'] or Anotera ['Higher'] level they assign you an additional piece that they themselves have chosen for you to study. It may be a sonata or a concerto! Nakas does not compel candidates to do this, which means that a student has more time to study a sonata, sometimes more than four months! What criteria is a student to be judged on? One

has only one and a half months, and the other more than four months, but both of them may get the same marks. So the criteria are different in each case. The 'Conservatory of Athens' is really a lot stricter than any other music institution and can make you attain a good knowledge of music and become a successful professional.

21. **G. M.:** *How do tuition fees or staff salaries affect each conservatory's policy?*

22. **F:** There is a basic difference in payments. For instance, in the private sectors you are paid according to the number of students you teach whereas in the 'Conservatory of Athens' you are paid monthly. I have signed a special contract with 'Philippos Nakas' conservatory and I am lucky to say that, although I started off being paid according to the pupil's level and the number of students, now the number of students has nothing to do with my salary, as I am regarded as one of the most experienced teachers there. I get paid even for the long summer holidays.

23. **G. M.:** *Do you see any differences between the two conservatories you work for?*

24. **F:** I can see some differences especially among the students since the conservatories I work for are in different residential areas in Athens. Most children from Athens Centre Conservatory attend the renowned Arsakio [the well-known high society Athens college] while a number from the Western Athens districts enjoy themselves by frequenting clubs where bouzouki [one of the most popular musical instruments in Greece] is the main instrument. Well, their music listening plays an important role in their piano studies. I have come to the conclusion that a good student at school is a good one at the piano too. I just can't say why. It might be a matter of personality. They say to themselves 'I have to do something and I'll do it. My teacher has told me to'. As for the music they are listening to, the very same students may tell me that after the lesson they are going to listen to such and such music, or go to such and such bar or disco, but piano remains piano for them. One of my most industrious students is like that. One might be attending the Arsakio but, at the same time, not be competent at the piano.

25. The difference between the two conservatories I work for, is the way their parents come to me and ask me about their children's progress. A child's attitude towards

his studies and his homework springs from his character. 'The teacher said so, so I'll do it'. It doesn't matter what suburb he comes from.

26. **G. M.:** *If I were to attend some lessons at the central conservatory do you think that I would have been able to distinguish any differences?*

27. **F:** No, I wouldn't say so. In both conservatories I keep up a good teacher-parent relationship. I don't know if I have been lucky or if it was a matter of coincidence, but I've had good parents as well as good students from both conservatories. I find, however, one in the Western district a lot friendlier. They have a different way of expressing themselves. In the central one they talk about swimming, tennis, taekwondo and a lot of other things they want their children to study. And I ask 'how are they going to cope with all those things?' They answer 'we keep on trying'. Parents behave differently when you meet them. This doesn't have to do with the children's progress. I'm quite aware of it. It all depends on each child and whether he really believes that he has to study hard. If this is so all his outside activities such as swimming, tennis etc. are not a hindrance to him.

28. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to add to this excerpt?*

29. **F:** No, let's go on.

**F2 M2: CLEMENTI, SONATINA, OPUS 36, N. 3, UN POCO ADAGIO, IN G MAJOR**

30. **G. M.:** *This must have been one of M2's new lessons on this piece, but I saw you being very careful about her paying attention to every detail. Would you please go further and comment on it?*

31. **F:** It was one of the few times M2 was studying this piece indeed. She is only a child. She was quite good at notes but, probably because of her nervousness, she missed a lot of things. First of all, she held on to the dotted note, so the following one came out a lot shorter than it should have been. In this piece each bar is in 4/4 time, but we must play it as if it was in 2/4. So she made two mistakes, thus making it sound like marching music. That's why I told her at one moment that she had changed its character. That's what I am trying to achieve in this piece. It was a

matter of thinking. When I pointed it out to her, at the end of the same lesson she managed to deal with it quite successfully. It was enough for her to listen to me performing it for just a few seconds. So I repeat again that it was only a matter of simple thinking.

32. **G. M.:** *I've noticed that you even change the way you talk to children according to their age. Has being a graduate from a university education course in any way helped you in this matter?*

33. **F:** It certainly has, but when you have a little child who asks you in his lovely little voice, 'what does this title mean?' you have to answer him in the same tones. A question like that wouldn't be one that M2, who is twelve years old, would ask, but M1 most probably would.

34. **G. M.:** *While attending one of your sessions I kept on jotting down some notes and at one moment I realised by the tone of your voice that you were addressing the next student that had taken the place of the previous one. You had become, all of a sudden, a new person.*

35. **F:** That's something that comes quite naturally. I cannot talk to a small child in the same way that I would to an older one. I change the tone of my voice. I am fully aware of it. My voice and mannerisms depend not only on the age but also on the level of his musical attainment. I would not dare speak to M1 about polyphony, but even if I did, I would not say it in the same way as I would with M2, who is twelve years old.

36. **G. M.:** *If a piece is compulsory for his studies and the student is not keen on it, what would you do to convince him he should study it?*

37. **F:** Quite often I come across this problem with older students especially in the Messi ['Middle'] level. A lot of children tell me, 'we have to play this but I don't like it', and I answer, 'Look, when you have to deal with the repertoire that you need to study, we have to study a variety of pieces'. They might not like the melody, or it might be that the part for the left hand seems hard for them, but I always tell them they have to study them. It is absolutely necessary for them to study an etude with a difficult left-hand part or a piece that doesn't appeal to them.

38. Sometimes they might come across a point in a piece with three notes that have to be played with the left hand and two with the right one and they usually say to me, 'let's try another one'. Sometimes they come along and say to me 'I haven't studied it. I just couldn't. I simply don't want to get involved'. I have noticed, however, that, whenever I change the piece and let them play the one they have already chosen, they find great pleasure in preparing it. It is very important when they like the piece. They get a lot out of studying a variety of music pieces. That's why I insist on that point.

39. **G. M.:** *What do your students usually play at concerts?*

40. **F:** I intended to tell you about this but you asked me first. I am very lenient as far as the pieces they play at concerts or exams is concerned. It's actually their own choice. But when we talk about 'repertoire' we have to study everything modern and from the past, even scales and difficult etudes. When I have a student who devotes most of his time to studying his Lyceum subjects and has not enough time for piano, he may say, 'let me choose four pieces now that I am fond of, so that I can enjoy studying them'. This is a different case. He may choose a Mozart sonata that he likes more than another one. Otherwise he might come along next time and say, 'I haven't done anything. Let's play the scales'. In order not to have this kind of situation we adopt these alternatives.

41. For students who are advancing at a regular pace, we usually play all the prescribed pieces that are deemed necessary for each case, because this is what we have to do, with the exception of concerts and examinations where I ask them to play whatever they like best and are capable of performing well. So they are successful.

42. **G. M.:** *Does being a pianist and performer yourself help you in your teaching?*

43. **F:** Yes, it does. I can play the pieces to demonstrate them to my students or to persuade them that they are worth studying. But sometimes, it actually rebounds on me when the piece is not to the best of their liking [she laughs].

44. I have a student who wants to play only pieces in the minor key or Chopin's Nocturnes. She regards the pieces in the major key as pleasant, but she doesn't like them. I demonstrate it to her by playing it on the piano and commenting, 'listen how

beautiful it is. Take the CD and listen to it at home'. Although I always insist that they should listen to the pieces they are to study, they never do. All the pieces from the Messi ['Middle'] level and onwards – Mozart sonatas or even Mendelssohn pieces – are nowadays recorded on CDs. If one of them listens to them by sheer chance, he might be discouraged as it may be performed at a very fast pace, so the learner might say, 'how am I to play it like him?' I answer that at least he has to listen to it, to understand what atmosphere he has to create, find out what he has to listen to, and what is there to be listened to. I tell him that he doesn't have to play it exactly as the pianist does on the CD. They usually insist, 'I cannot play it as well or as fast as the performer and, on top of that, I would never express it the way he does'. I tell them to play a mazurka the way they like it, because if you get another CD performed by another pianist, it would come out completely different. Even if I myself play the same piece I would play it in a different way. Consequently, I point out to them that they should play it the way they feel. It will be another kind of interpretation. I advise them 'listen to two or three CDs and draw your own conclusions about what a mazurka means. A mazurka lets you express yourself freely. Even if you listen to three excellent presentations of a Mozart sonata you might find them completely different.

45. It is a good thing to listen to a variety of recordings of the same piece. Often I play a piece myself or I ask a student who is studying the same piece at that time to play it for another student, in order that she or he may listen to it. It's very important to listen to the pieces they are playing. I can see the difference right away. If they have listened to a sonata before coming to the lesson, when they come to the lesson and perform it, you can see the difference. That is, they can listen to the phrasing and the harmonic progression, where the first note is leading them. If they haven't done that, not only do they make a lot of mistakes in the notes, but also they don't know where they are leading to each time. Sometimes, before they tell me that they have listened to a CD, I am aware of it. This helps not only my students, but myself as well. Whenever I have to play something, I spend time listening to two or three recordings and then I compare them. I say, 'this is good for this specific reason, the other one for that, and that one is just fair on all points'.

46. **G. M.:** *When one of your students begins studying a piece, in all the lessons that I was present at you always look for everything to be done correctly from the start. Do you insist on this or was it just a matter of coincidence?*
47. **F:** It all depends on what level of attainment the student has reached at that moment. If he doesn't know the notes yet, I don't have to tell him anything except just 'learn the notes', or 'place your fingers properly'. We have occasions when advanced students do not know what finger to use so we cannot possibly talk about everything at that time. We'll set off with the fingers suitable for that occasion. I initially tell them to find them out themselves. Then we will correct them together, but we will not go into issues that are connected with expression or musicality. When a little child brings me a tiny little piece with two lines in it, I can spare time for further details. Generally, however, you start building it up step by step. Our first concern is to learn the notes, to have the proper hand position, and later to see that the piece is flowing and listen to what should actually be listened to.
48. **G. M.:** *What would you say is the main reason for your students beginning a piano course?*
49. **F:** I am not sure whether all my students do that because of their parents having some connection with music. For instance, L's father works for 'Nakas' Conservatory selling music books, and she may have started her studies because of that. Most of my students have come here because they think the piano is more accessible than any other instrument for anyone willing to start a music course since all the notes are ready and right in front of you. All the other musical instruments present difficulties, as you have to find the notes yourself. Some of the children come from the 'Junior' course, which they start simply to get some kind of musical education, since music is a joy, rhythm or motion as well, and since the piano is the next step after the harmonium, which they are taught in the 'Junior' course.
50. **A,** on the other hand, attended the 'Junior' course, but only for one year, since the times of the conservatory lessons did not suit her father. So instead of doing another two-year 'Junior' course he said, 'ah, well, let her start a piano course'. First of all, she is very, very young. She is only a kindergarten girl. It is too early for her to start a piano course. There are times when I can hardly get my message across to her.

You say to her, 'doh, ray, me', and after a short time if you point out 'doh' to her, she'll say, 'that's fah'. Then, you are stunned at the answer and wonder where on earth she got that 'fah' from. She has never been taught that, I am absolutely sure. Her father comes along then, and simply says, 'let's press her to learn the piano, and if you think that she cannot do that, she must give up her studies'. So we don't know what to decide. You see, her sister is attending piano lessons, so A's parents say 'ah, well, she can do that as well'. It is obvious that the dominant spirit at home is 'let's learn music'. And I must remind you that their parents wouldn't have the slightest idea about music. I am unfortunate in that throughout my career there haven't been any of my students' parents who have been able to play the piano. Of course there are very rare occasions when a graduate, or some old auntie, used to play, and since there is a piano in the house they say, 'let the girl or the boy take up piano lessons'. There are others, however, who regard music as a kind of culture and a very good preoccupation, but not actually as a hobby. Many parents are firm about their children getting some kind of University degree, but, at the same time, they consider getting a piano diploma/degree is something that comes naturally without having to make much effort. They look at both sides of the coin but are sure that their side will turn up no matter how the coin is tossed. They don't want to waste money or spend their child's time on long studies learning how to play the piano. Furthermore, not only do they regard it as a kind of culture, but think that it is wonderful for their offspring to play the piano, and at the same time enjoy it, and get the superb feelings that come with such a marvellous world.

51. **G. M.:** *What further benefits would you say the children could gain by playing the piano?*

52. **F:** Well, it has to do with their inner being. The satisfaction that you get from listening to classical music makes you improve your cultural outlook. The same thing goes for ballet, which, of course, cultivates one's body or movements. The piano really springs from your mind and heart. It opens up new channels of contentment and entertainment.

53. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to commend in this particular excerpt?*

54. **F:** No, no. Let's move on.



### F3 D: DUVERNOY, N. 17, MOVEMENT DE VALSE, IN F MAJOR

55. **G. M.:** *You have put particular emphasis on the preparation of hand position and thought, before anyone even touches the piano. Would you please analyse this for me?*

56. **F:** I keep on noticing this in all my students. Everything should be like that. I mean that, even if they are playing each hand separately, their hand position should be properly placed right from the beginning; the fingering, the body posture, the musicality and so on. This particular piece involves a repetitive difficulty in moving from one note to another distant note. If a person doesn't learn it right from the beginning, when he plays the piece slowly and separately with each hand, he will meet with D's trouble. That is, she didn't have her hands in the right position, so when she managed to play the piece at a fast tempo, she just couldn't cope with this difficulty on those particular bars. At a fast tempo we can be successful with the easy parts, but we stumble when it comes to the slightest difficulty. As D, for example, could only play the two distant notes at a slow tempo, she could play them only at this tempo, if the rest of the piece could be played at a fast speed. It would be hard for us to overcome a difficulty if we didn't persistently and patiently study it properly right from the first lessons, so that the whole piece can gradually be executed excellently from a slow pace to a fast one. Especially for her left hand I tell her, 'get ready to move from one position to the other'. I mean, first of all, the proper position of the hand, to make use of the pause that exists and give us the opportunity to get our hand ready. We just do not wait to play all the previous notes and then see where the next left-hand note is. That's not music at all. It's an interruption with pauses. We must fix our attention from the beginning, when we can play only separately with each hand. We are careful with our hand position since we have the time to cope with it, that is counting aloud 'one, two, three etc.', getting everything in the right order and preparing the hand to move on.

57. I also wanted her to connect the phrases, to think about the phrases in pairs not as a single one that has not got any sequence. I always insist on that. I want them to be familiar with that right from the start. They must know that the piece is like that. It leads them somewhere. It's not like 'lah, te, lah, te, doh' [She is singing in a

monotonous way]. It is 'LAH, te, lah, te, doh' [She is singing again and so showing that the phrase is taking you somewhere]. The student should have deep in his mind this matter, the harmonic progression. To achieve this, of course, one has to have some knowledge of the notes. Afterwards students can listen to the phrase's starting and finishing point, so they will be able to connect it to the following ones. That's what really annoyed me during D's lesson.

58. **G. M.:** *At a certain moment you played for her the piece and said to her 'that sounds better, doesn't it?' I gathered you pay a lot of attention to the children listening to what they are playing. How do you evaluate the quality of sound?*
59. **F:** For me, this is of great importance. One has to listen to the difference and to be able to distinguish why one sound is particularly better than the other one; to be able to say why you don't like it. Often learners cannot tell the difference. That is, you demonstrate a phrase in two ways, and then you ask them, 'can you see any difference?' They usually answer, 'it was a lot more melodic so it means that you have played it in another dynamic, e.g. "piano". That wasn't really so. I tell them 'now, I'll play it "forte", so you will understand that it wasn't the dynamics you liked, but the continuation of the phrase. It had a beginning and ending point'. I explain to them that, whenever we create a 'crescendo' or a 'diminuendo', we lead a phrase towards a point. Dynamics are there but they do not affect the quality of sound or the meaning of the phrase. 'How about playing a piece without any dynamics?' I ask them. We aim at understanding the harmonic progression of everything. It is the same when we talk. Often I use the following example: 'this morning I am going to', and I stop there. Then I go on and ask them, 'did you understand what I am going to do?' 'This morning I will go to the super-market'. This is a full sentence. Then we pause for a while, we breathe and go on to the next phrase, 'I am going to go to the fun-fair and afterwards come back home'.
60. **G. M.:** *You have also stressed where the accent should have fallen on her phrases.*
61. **F:** Yes, it's not only D that has to do it, especially in this excerpt, but to almost every learner. When we have to deal with three quavers, three crotchets or anything that's in three, it is very important that I should put the stress on the first note [she is singing it as it should be sung]. It is like a waltz. We have to take a good first step.

62. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to add to this excerpt?*

63. **F:** No, not at all. Let's go on.

**F4 A: NOTES [ONE OF HER FIRST PIANO LESSONS]**

64. **G. M.:** *Would you like to talk about A?*

65. **F:** Yes, A has been with me for only one year, but she has attended the 'junior' course for one year and finally, decided to take up piano lessons.

66. **G. M.:** *Being aware of the way you have been teaching A away from the piano in this lesson, would you be kind enough to tell me if you adopt the method of practising away from the piano?*

67. **F:** A possesses a piano at home. Whenever new students come to me, whether they have a piano or not, I regard it as a must. Some students, who have started music lessons in the 'Junior' course, because the instrument they studied was the harmonium, or other students who find a piano expensive, buy a harmonium in place of a piano. A harmonium is definitely not a piano. You cannot create the variety of sounds that you can with a piano. The harmonium keyboard is flexible and the sound lasts longer as you move from one note to the other. So a harmonium doesn't help a learner for even a short time at the beginning. Well, when I get a new student who doesn't possess a piano, because every parent seems to think that he has to get some results in his child's progress before going on to such an expensive purchase, I recommend them to rent a piano, or I tell those who are enthusiastic about it to buy a cheap 'clavinova'. The latter can help them for quite some time, and even to reach the 'Lower' level. Then they can either come to the conservatory to study, as I usually recommend, but in no way on a harmonium. I come back again to the flexible keyboard, the lasting sound and the less strength that you require to deepen every key of the harmonium compared to those of the piano. I am fully convinced that it's a lot better for a student to come to the conservatory and practise on the piano, for even the shortest time available, than play on the harmonium at home. The piano, nevertheless, does become necessary at some level when you play more complicated pieces which are composed in all octaves. Studying on a

harmonium, the learner does not have the right sense of the position of the notes on the keyboard. That is, he doesn't know where to place his hands or how to sit on the stool. He thinks, 'let it be a "doh", no matter where that "doh" is'.

68. As for your question regarding practice away from piano, I recommend it only to advanced students. Unfortunately, this year none of my advanced students are industrious enough, so I would not dare ask them for this kind of study. They hardly ever listen to any music. How am I to ask them to get the score and say to themselves 'now I am going to study'? I've been doing this for a long, long time. I do it because I believe wholeheartedly in this kind of study, since the piano is something that is deeply rooted in systematic thinking.
69. **G. M.:** *Has there been a shortage of enrolments in Greek conservatories in recent years, and if so, how would you explain that?*
70. **F:** There has been an apparent shortage of students, and there is a continual decline in numbers. I hate to say that it used to be 'fashionable', but now it's gone. I just cannot imagine why at a steady pace parents would stop enrolling their children. There must be a financial reason. Fees are usually high, as they are here at 'Nakas' conservatory. It makes a person stop and think it over. It is a matter of economy. Parents, mind you, have to pay fees for foreign languages as well as extra school subject tuition, and that amounts to a lot of money.
71. **G. M.:** *You asked A at a given moment and for a short while not to look at the piano and, after playing some notes, asked her what the notes were. Do you ask all your students to do that, or only A, and is it for some specific reason?*
72. **F:** Every time I get a new learner I just want to control his listening and rhythm. It's a matter of a general check-up really.
73. **G. M.:** *Do you believe that having a good ear for music helps in piano learning? In the violin this is quite obvious.*
74. **F:** Can you imagine that I have some students who don't become aware of making a mistake such as playing B instead of B flat? They complete the piece repeating the same mistake, and they don't pick it up. It's terrible! I ask them to sing the notes in their study, as well as in our sessions. I am firmly in favour of a good ear for music.

Dictation and listening are usually taught in the Theory course. So I always keep in touch with those teachers regarding my students' progress. We talk about piano and theory lessons and I usually come to the conclusion that their progress is relatively on the same level. That is to say, if a student is not good at his theory subjects, he would be the same kind of person who would not distinguish between B and B flat, or would move from a chord full of errors to the next one without getting upset at all.

75. **G. M.:** *We don't have anything to add here, do we?*

76. **F:** No, no, not at all. Let's carry on.

#### **F5 L: BACH, N. 8, MUSETTE POCO ALLEGRETTO**

77. **G. M.:** *Now we come to this piece and I just wonder what you were driving at?*

78. **F:** I was trying to emphasise the rhythm, the phrases, the staccato, the legato and the fingering. We had already played it once separately with each hand, and now, in this excerpt, she had to play half of it as well as she could. She finds sight-reading difficult to handle, so it takes her a long time to learn a piece. But when she manages to master it, we get very good results.

79. **G. M.:** *What is your opinion about improving sight-reading?*

80. **F:** It can be improved. I often give her books with easy pieces to play and practise on. The bad part of it is that this girl usually keeps her eyes fixed on a note she is playing at a certain time. So she finds it hard to move on to the next one. I just want her to learn to move her eyes and hands away from that note and on to the next one. When she is practising in sight-reading, I often tell her to stop when she makes a mistake. 'Move on. Keep going on'. I asked her to do half of the piece, because it is a piece with difficulty in the distant notes. It's a case of making your hands go faster; you must have coped with this difficulty of the distant notes. You have to practise your hand movement so as to get as fast as possible from one note to the next one. I usually show them a special study for distant notes. We press the first note and directly move our hand over the next note without touching it. We do this

in order to teach our hand this movement and then we press the next one. I learned this from my teacher.

81. In this half piece we learn the notes, the hand position and any difficulties, as well as how to do whatever the score demands of you. If it asks you to create a phrase, you do it!

82. **G. M.:** *You are very keen on this indeed and you make a point of it in front of your students. Do you think that they should choose particular editions, and if so, what would the criteria be?*

83. **F:** Oh, yes, of course they should. Good editions, like the original ones, help a lot. The students usually buy cheap ones. There must be a choice even from the first Bach edition. Later this becomes a necessity. As for Chopin's etudes, I would recommend Cortot's editions, which include some special exercises. I do the same with Mozart. I usually say 'get that piece in that edition'.

84. **G. M.:** *You told her on one occasion to keep cool. What would you recommend to a student in order to get rid of nervousness?*

85. **F:** Whenever I prepare them for a concert or an exam, just before beginning it I try to make them realise, first of all, that any interruption should by no means create any anxiety at all. Unfortunately, they are usually confronted in one way or the other with a momentary loss of concentration.

86. If this happens our aim is to have the students prepared for the sound or the expression, so that the piece can be heard a lot better, although there might be some wrong notes. The meaning is what counts, and that should be given out to the audience. Even I myself, when I talk, am liable to make a blunder, but that doesn't mean that I cannot talk properly. So if they make a slight mistake, they shouldn't be put off and say, 'what am I to do next?', and miss all the rest because of a mishap.

87. What's important is the way you play something, the way you talk, or express yourself, and if something trifling happens, I insist that it should not affect us in the least. I don't often say the same thing to senior students, since we have to have a technique that almost reaches perfection when one has to perform in concerts or exams. A small child, who is not required to play with the same technique as a

senior, can build it up in such a way that we can get him ready to give 101% performance, so that with nervousness taking away one percent of it we can bring him down to performing with 100% perfection. I have quite often witnessed cases of children who do make a mistake in the notes, and after that they keep on making more mistakes and burst into tears. Whenever this happens, I explain to the committee what actually is the case, and when the candidates get the results of the exams, usually with a high mark, they realise that that slight mistake they made didn't affect their progress at all. It is more important to interpret something well than not to make an occasional mistake, whether the mistake is in the simplest piece of Bach or in a Mozart sonata.

88. **G. M.:** *Do you think that the ability to express the deeper notions of a piece is something that can be taught?*

89. **F:** Of course it can be, especially to advanced students. For instance, when they are playing a mazurka, I tell them how and when it was written, that it is a romantic piece, and what romanticism means.

90. **G. M.:** *Is there any composer for whom you'd find it hard to teach the meaning?*

91. **F:** Oh, yes, Mozart. A lot of my students find him easy as far as the notes are concerned, and I tell them that in relation to Liszt's notes, of course, he is easy. But to play this crystal-clear Mozart with everything in position, and to produce diamond-like sounds, that's where we find most difficulties in presenting such sublime technique and music. He might appear to be easy with regard to notes, but as far as I am concerned, he is very hard to teach and play properly. Well, to tell you the truth, one is never able to interpret him correctly, no matter how old one is. When you are a child you don't possess the right technique, but when you are mature you are actually deprived of the child's enthusiasm that's necessary to express him.

92. **G. M.:** *Do you have a special methodological 'secret' to recommend in solving technique difficulties?*

93. **F:** No, I don't have a specific kind of technique besides the fact that you have to study scales and arpeggios daily. I believe that the latter help a lot, even with a

Mozart sonata. Students take it to heart that they have to study scales and don't realise how good it is for them. In addition to those that I recommend, the students should study those peculiar points that they find hard, such as chords, dotted notes, and each and every other particular difficulty in the piece. I insist on that, especially for the advanced students.

94. **G. M.:** *From what I gathered you appeared to ask your students at every lesson even before they started playing the piece if they had studied some difficult points especially hard.*

95. **F:** Yes, of course. It is important that they should be aware and keep it in mind that every piece does have its own difficult points. That is, to make the move from one note to a distant one, how to play an arpeggio, how to play the semiquavers simultaneously with both hands or how to play a trill. We have to correct them for each particular piece. We say, 'look for it yourself and find where the difficulty lies, and then we'll talk about it'. I don't always do the job for them. They have to get used to learning the ropes themselves. I say to them 'study the piece in any way you like and we'll talk about it later, then I'll be able to tell you whether it was right or not, and at the same time show you whatever else is necessary'.

96. **G. M.:** *Would you like to add anything?*

97. **F:** No, let's carry on.

**F6 M1: FANNY WATERMAN AND MARION HAREWOOD, RICREAZIONI MUSIC PIANO LESSONS, 1<sup>ST</sup> BOOK, VARKAROLA**

98. **G. M.:** *You put special emphasis on hand looseness and position in this excerpt. How can you teach them?*

99. **F:** First of all, I have to teach the children the position for their hands on the piano. I always insist on that. I tell them to let the hand weight fall on the tips of their fingers from the shoulders, not the wrist. If they don't do that, the notes get stuck and the quality of sound deteriorates. I mean it becomes a lot coarser. I make that point especially for my advanced students. To make them understand this, I ask them to



play a chord standing up, so that they may be able to realise how the sound is heard when the arm pressure comes from the shoulder.

100. I told M1 to relax, and I stressed the importance of his hand position, his wrist should be a bit over the keyboard and not touch the wooden part. Especially for this child, I am annoyed at the wrong position of his hands rather than his hand looseness. I ask him to lift his wrist a little bit and move his elbow away from his body (I mean his wrist should be parallel to the keyboard), but he keeps it fixed on the wooden part of the keyboard. That's why he has to move his elbow away from his body. He is not aware of that, so he keeps on lifting his shoulder and then, as a result, he gets stiffened. His trouble, however, begins from the bad position of his hand, not from the fact that he gets stiffened.

101. **G. M.:** *Do you belong to a special music 'school', as regards the hand position?*

102. **F:** No, I wouldn't say such a thing. I simply see what every child needs with that particular hand, that particular piece and how to play properly. If one has his wrist stuck to the keyboard I think that nothing can be played.

103. **G. M.:** *I've noticed that you keep on encouraging your students. You told M1, for instance, that, although you were disappointed with his hands, his notes were excellent. You always have a good word for them. Is it something that you do conscientiously?*

104. **F:** Yes, I believe in encouraging students. On the other hand, I always tell them the truth, 'you have studied hard', – 'this was right' – 'this was wrong'. I have to tell M1, especially now that he is going to perform at a concert, what went wrong and what went right. And his only problem seems to be his wrist. We just try to amend it. I am not sure that he has understood why I insist so consistently on that. Later on he will, when, of course, he'll be faced with a hard movement of his hand, when his wrist will be virtually stuck to the wooden part of the keyboard.

105. **G. M.:** *Has he improved in anyway since I last saw him?*

106. **F:** Yes, of course he has, as he knows that he has to perform at the forthcoming concert and he is very careful about his hand position and body posture. Well, it doesn't really matter if he occasionally forgets all about it. As he has been playing

the pieces for a long time and has learnt the notes, he wants to prove that he can do something further and improve his hand position. A has also improved a lot. She has learnt the notes. It took us a long time but she has found her way.

107. **G. M.:** *You kept on telling him how to play his phrase and you combined it with the meaning that he had to give as he played the 'Drifting Boat'. Would you like to tell me more about this?*

108. **F:** Music is like poetry. You definitely cannot play in a monotonous way with the same tone, nor can you utter every syllable with the same intensity. Neither you nor the audience gets any contentment out of it. Sometimes when they finish playing a piece, I ask them 'are you aware of the way you played it?' and then I sit at the piano and show them how to play it. Then they ask me, 'was it really the piece that I played before? You played it in a completely different way!' That's what I say 'listening' is all about. You should, even at a very early age, listen to records or performances by other pianists. When I play it myself they get to understand it and try at the same time to play it the way I did, as they already have one, and only one, target. They, of course, try to play it as fast as I do, but they can't make it yet.

109. **G. M.:** *Yes, you told him about it and asked him to play it at a slower pace. You also pointed out to him that it's not worth playing it in a fast way with the wrong hand position.*

110. **F:** I want him to have complete control over his hands and body posture.

111. **G. M.:** *Do you believe in the peculiarities that a slow study entails?*

112. **F:** Yes, indeed, I do. I do! I do! You see everything right from the start. Playing at a fast pace and out of control is the easiest thing to do. You just say 'ah, well, since I played it so fast it was only natural that something would go wrong'. To achieve the proper slow execution that's what is difficult. To get, that is, everything in the right position.

113. A good pianist is one who will play fast and to perfection what he has already played at a slow pace. It is obvious that even at a slow pace it is a lot harder.

114. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to talk about at this point?*

115. **F:** No, no, nothing at all. Let's move on to M3.

**F7 M3: BACH, INVENTION (TWO VOICES), N. 9, IN F MINOR**

116. **G. M.:** *What were you trying to emphasise to her in this excerpt?*

117. **F:** I intended to make her understand polyphony and the repetition of the theme, as you cannot play a Bach piece with two voices and not be aware of what's going on. They usually learn that in their Theory course, but I have to point it out to them during a session. Later on, I'll be required to teach her what a fugue is, then a sonata, then what a 'theme' is, and everything that a piece involves.

118. **G. M.:** *What else were you actually trying to fish out at this particular time?*

119. **F:** Well, look, it was her first lesson with both hands in this piece. I wanted her to make the themes stand out, and be able to keep a balance between her hands and keep good control over everything. Although there were scales in the piece, she didn't know what fingers to use. At a slow tempo you can play with any finger you like, even though your fingers do stumble at times [She laughs]. But when it comes to the fast tempo how do we go about it? That's why I always maintain that we should put everything in order right from the beginning. This is the only way that a piece can move fast enough. That's very significant for me. I mean everything to be in the right order, such as the notes, the right fingers or the posture of the body. This is the only way for the piece to move on.

120. **G. M.:** *You made it a point that she had to overcome the difficulties of the piece. It seems to me that you pay a lot of attention to this point, is this so?*

121. **F:** Yes, of course, because when we have pinpointed the difficult parts we can sit and toil over them till we master them. I tell my students 'we cannot achieve anything by playing a piece from the beginning to the end. This is what I tell even my junior students who have to play only two lines. I advise them that if they have a problem only on the last bar, they have to work harder only on that particular bar. As for the seniors, it is obvious that I have to insist a lot more consistently, since they have to study longer pieces and they do come across some difficult points. We

have to sort those points out and then successfully deal with them so we may be able to incorporate the rest of the piece.

122. **G. M.:** *You also make an extensive use of the metronome. How would this help in piano learning?*

123. **F:** It helps us by confining us to one and only one target, and at the same time it reins us in from going at a fast pace with the easy points, and keeps us harnessed for the difficult points. It's a matter of balance, so to speak. It's one of the points that helps us most. That is, to maintain a uniform and balanced speed from the beginning to the end. As for the junior students, it shows them the tempo, so they do not get carried away and make a lot of unnecessary mistakes, although the piece is very slow. They should play at such a tempo that they can keep good control over the whole procedure. They can then move on step by step. That's what I asked M3 to do. To start with one tempo that she can handle, and have complete control over it. To bring out the themes and to have her fingers in the right places, and be sure that she moves from phrase to phrase in the right way. She should, besides, use the correct fingers.

124. **G. M.:** *You insisted on pointing out to them that they should connect their phrases even when they made mistakes in the notes.*

125. **F:** I have to tell them about everything right from the beginning, whether they are able to do it or not. They should know what they have to accomplish within the next few lessons, to know how this tie in the phrases should be brought about. To be aware that one phrase is like this and leads you somewhere there, or the left hand is intended for this theme, and at that point the right one is to take over; to know the harmonic progression, or how one hand takes over from the other. This is of great importance; otherwise, music would have no significance at all. Music is a womb of phrases, so is speech. It is something that one who wishes to play music should be fully conscious of.

126. **G. M.:** *Would you add anything to what we have already said about this excerpt?*

127. **F:** No, not a thing. Let's move on.

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

128. **G. M.:** *Now, I would like to ask you some general questions pertaining to your studies and in what way they helped you in your music teaching career.*
129. **F:** I graduated from the COA and I did my Master's degree in England. I got two Master's degrees, one from Trinity College of Music and another from the Royal College of Music. At that time, in Greece, only the latter degree was recognised, so I had to get both of them. They helped me greatly in piano playing, but not so much in teaching. Of course playing the piano at a high level helps to demonstrate to learners its workings, but, as far as my teaching is concerned, I think that the children themselves lead the way in my attempt to get them to understand me.
130. **G. M.:** *Having graduated from the COA and having taught for a short time there, would you have anything to say about the whole dominant policy that exists there and in what way that contributes towards students' progress?*
131. **F:** You mean that ever-present feeling you get when you register at the COA that everything is under control and in order, don't you? Personally, I wouldn't care a fig about any differences that might exist between the Greek conservatories. I only believe in teachers. I would devote myself in the same way to any of them. Anyone who wishes to become a professional has to go through a lot of hardships. Now, as for the sight-reading, and the requirements that you should be able to play from a manuscript at the COA, or to play a whole concerto accompanied by a piano, I regard them as purely administrative routine that have nothing to do with what we call 'disciplinary' policy. They could have obliged students to play one part of a concerto accompanied by an orchestra, because that's the real target of concerto study. I also think that it is a little bit silly to demand that one should be able to play directly from a manuscript. How useful would this be? I agree, of course, that one should be good at sight-reading. In Greece, they ask students of all conservatories to play a two-hour programme for a diploma. In England, you only play for thirty minutes and they judge you on that. You don't have to play for two and a half hours to prove that you are a good pianist. This, nevertheless, is standard policy for all Greek conservatories. At the COA they prepare them for becoming professional

musicians. A student of the said conservatory with a 'Very Good' mark would have got a 'Distinction' and a lot of prizes at any other conservatory. It is a good thing because from the COA a large number of graduates have made a career as professionals and have successfully continued their postgraduate studies abroad.

132. **G. M.:** *It's not only the COA that produces distinguished music people. There are a lot of the same merit that come from other music places too. There must be an explanation to it. What's your explanation?*

133. **F:** It's a matter of the teacher. And now, working for those private conservatories, I would do exactly what they do at the COA. For example, they keep a student for more than three years at the same level, if they deem it necessary. I just cannot let students advance at the time when one of their 'legs' looks as if it cannot keep up with the other. They cannot move on. A good student can also do self-evaluation of his playing. Shouldn't he be capable of estimating his potential or ability?

134. **G. M.:** *What are the benefits that one gets out of music? Is it necessary for someone to become a professional to be able to say that music has offered him something of importance?*

135. **F:** Just to learn music is very important. Not everybody can become a musician. What's more significant is to love what you are doing and, when attending a performance at the Megaro [One of the well-known music halls in Athens], to be able to enjoy a concert, in short to enjoy music.

136. **G. M.:** *What role do parents play in learning the piano?*

137. **F:** Parents, especially at the junior level, are very useful. I usually talk to them and ask them if they listen to what their child is playing. Beginners need some kind of help. A is an example. If someone doesn't stand by the child, for at least three to five minutes every day, he is virtually committing a crime, as the child can revise the three notes within that short time and be happy about it. They have to have someone by their side. When they find their way and are able to study on their own at a later stage, then comes the time when they may say to themselves, 'I like, or don't like, what I am doing'. At that stage they choose which way and how much

they are going to study. Then you only have to talk about it with them, not with their parents. As for the juniors, you talk with their parents about their home behaviour, their willingness to learn or whatever the children don't tell you.

138. **G. M.:** *Who is your favourite among the most famous pianists and why?*

139. **F:** I like Pollini very much. For instance, his performance of Chopin's concerto is the best I have ever listened to. He is the best. He has a superb technique and sensitivity. Those two qualities should be the criteria of a good artist. That is, how sensitive he is, and how well he interprets anything. Whether he disciplines himself to the score or not, I don't care at all. I think that all pianists should not be severely criticised for such things. I would never, of course, find excuses for a student. Once they inflicted no criticism at all on Richter when he stepped on to the platform to play, started off, then stopped, started again for the second time, stopped again and then took the score, opened it and started playing. He had some kind of memory problem. And why not?

140. **G. M.:** *Have you ever changed your attitude towards music technique?*

141. **F:** No, not so much towards the technique, but towards my sound, yes! When I went to England I became aware of things that I hadn't noticed while I was here. I am a person who believes that I have to keep on listening and improving myself all the time. That's why I expect my students to do so too, to listen, that is, to their sound or their phrases. My English teacher always insisted on that. On your sound, how to distinguish between a hard forte from a soft one, how you can get a stronger sound without being hard, but letting your weight fall on to the tips of your fingers not on the piano. Those are the things that I learned there. In Greece my teacher was concerned with how to bring something out with the right technique, and at the same time be musical. Even if my forte was a bit hard, that wasn't something to worry about.

142. **G. M.:** *Which of your teachers was the one who influenced you the most?*

143. **F:** It was my very first teacher, because the one who trained me to get the diploma found me actually ready. With my next one we built up the music structure. My English teacher taught me to think about everything I do. I was actually a little

'computer'. 'You have to do this technique study, and then you'll get these results', and being free with my fingers we used to say beforehand, 'ah well, we are definitely going to play this study beautifully'. It wasn't only this, however. All the rest, such as the right sound, I learned in England.

144. **G. M.:** *How would you describe a good teacher?*

145. **F:** He should be able to get every student to know that each and every student is an individual, he should know how to approach and treat each child according to his abilities or his limitations. There are cases when, although there are no mistakes in their playing and you think that they must have worked hard, it is because they have been at ease. For this reason we jot down remarks on what and how much they study, and then I discover that there are students who, although they study for only three hours a week, play brilliantly, whereas others, who have been studying for a lot longer, cannot move their hands. The teacher should be able to handle the situation regarding what assignment and how much should be given to his students.

146. **G. M.:** *What is your opinion of 'talented' students?*

147. **F:** I believe that they do exist, but because at a later stage they find swimming or other sports or hobbies more interesting than piano, they give it up. These talented children could have performed a Chopin nocturne and have made me cry at their final exams. There are not always future prospects for them. There are children who, although they work hard, don't finally make it. Even a talented child has to have special treatment from the teacher. The latter should always treat each and every student in accordance with each individual's idiosyncrasies or potential. When it comes to teaching a talented person, it gets harder. You notice a certain degree of potential in the music, the technique or something else, and you keep on wondering how you are to make the right use of that, in order not to let it go astray.

148. **G. M.:** *What does a 'good piano student' mean to you?*

149. **F:** For me, I regard as a good student anyone who responds to what I or any teacher expects him to be, that is, to be musical, to study hard, and to have a good technique, anyone who knows what he has to do or can handle a piece on his own.



You don't just tell him 'here you do this, there you do that'. He could prepare himself for a concert or exams and enjoy it himself, and his audience as well.

150. **G. M.:** *Do you think my presence at your sessions has affected your teaching in any way?*

151. **F:** Me? No, not at all. Some students, however, made some mistakes that they might not have done, so I had to point them out to them. In a general sense, I wouldn't say that you have interfered at all.

152. **G. M.:** *I ask this question because I was left in doubt about what exactly your relationship is with your students. For instance, would they have confided in you any of their private problems if I were not present with the video camera during your sessions?*

153. **F:** We get on very well indeed. Even tiny little children tell me about their personal life. 'After this I'll go to my friend or to the theatre', they usually tell me. Besides, the lesson is not simply about playing the piano or just teaching one or two things and then off we go. On no occasion is it so. Here it's not like the COA where you can spend as much time as you like on busying yourself with your student. Here, as soon as the forty minutes have elapsed, the next student steps in. My students know very well that if they don't see the previous student move out, they don't come in. I usually walk out and call him in. Of course, we don't talk about the student's private problems at the end of the lesson. You can see that he may have a problem by the expression on his face or he might himself tell you his problem. There are cases when we might spend the whole lesson talking about a serious private problem. For example, I had a student whose parents were separated.

154. **G. M.:** *I have nothing else to ask you, unless you'd like to add something. I wholeheartedly thank you for your co-operation.*

155. **F:** I thank you too and I wish you every success.

## 'G'S INTERVIEW

This seventh interview took place in Athens. 'G.M.' is Georgia Markea (the interviewer). 'G' is a name given to the teacher for reasons of anonymity.

### G 1 C: DEBUSSY, 4 POUR LES NOTES REPETEES SCHERCHANDO, IN G MAJOR

1. **G. M.:** *Do you have anything to say about C playing Debussy?*
2. **G:** She is a talented girl but not to an extraordinary extent. She is, however, endowed with very good hands. She can play quite well on the piano. She is an immature child and this immaturity is evident in her playing as well.
3. **G. M.:** *Do you believe that one should be mature in order to express oneself in music?*
4. **G:** Yes, of course. Take D for example, the student who has some kind of trouble with her fingers. She is maturer than C who expects you to tell her everything. She doesn't listen to music very much, unless I ask her and insist on it. She doesn't aim to achieve anything important in her studies. On the other hand, D, who suffers from some physical defects in her fingers, might never be a top pianist. D has a big problem. You might have noticed it. Her fifth finger is a lot smaller than the others. She cannot play the octaves with her first and fifth fingers although her hand is large. She plays them with the first and fourth instead. At present we are trying to strengthen it, so we might manage to improve her playing. She is, however, trying to work things out herself. However, C might be a great pianist, although she never relies on herself.
5. **G. M.:** *It looked like as if she was playing what was a new piece for her.*
6. **G:** Yes, it was one of her first lessons on this particular piece.
7. **G. M.:** *I've noticed that, although she made a lot of mistakes, you treated her with a smile, as if you were enjoying it, instead of getting upset, as is common with teachers. Exactly the same thing happened with the rest of your students. How do*

*you personally take it? Could it be that, being a pianist yourself, you have a particular understanding of students making mistakes?*

8. **G:** No, I don't do it because of that. First of all, that depends on the learner. There are children, because they are my 'secret favourites', with whose mistakes I am amused. In cases of reluctant students, I may get angry when they make mistakes. In general, when the notes are not particularly wrong or very striking, I don't get upset, because I myself happen to have played the piece thousands and thousands of times; my tutor in Munich has listened to it quite a few times and never corrected anything, and now I find myself in a position where I discover that I used to play a note wrong. And do you know who opened my eyes to that? A student of mine did. I insisted that I was right, and he insisted on his part that he was right at the time he was playing it. I looked at it again, brooded over it, and finally, I must confess, realised he was right. Nobody had so far discovered my mistake. Neither my teacher in Munich, nor any one in Greece.
9. **G. M.:** *I insist on my previous query and I'd like to ask you again, being an experienced piano performer yourself, could it have affected your understanding of the students' mistakes?*
10. **G:** That could be the case. To be honest, I don't regard the wrong notes as being very important. The same thing, on the other hand, doesn't go for the pieces where someone has been studying for a long time and still keeps on repeating the very same mistakes. A repeated mistake that haunts you, or a harmonic one, is like being struck by a hammer on the ear. And I say to myself 'can't she or he hear anything she or he is playing?'
11. **G. M.:** *May I ask what you are actually looking for when someone plays a piece for the first time?*
12. **G:** I would rather have them study everything right from the very start because afterwards it becomes more or less routine work. That is 'now we do notes and fingers, then the dynamics'. Isn't this a case of a non-artistic attitude in a way?
13. **G. M.:** *What actually discourages you as far as the mistakes a student makes are concerned?*

14. **G:** I mostly get angry with a wrongly accentuated phrase. I mean, stressing the second note instead of the first one. Generally, if the accent is on the wrong notes. This really drives me mad, even more than the wrong note. Children who would not care a fig about the way they are playing usually make such mistakes in a melody, because they are less interested in good listening. If they were more interested, they would get upset themselves, wouldn't they?
15. **G. M.:** *You have repeatedly been talking about the subject of compulsorily listening to what one is playing. In particular you told C to listen as well as to keep her mind on the notes. By the way, I would like to ask you about the potential that a student should possess to do successful piano study.*
16. **G:** We quite often bring up the subject of what we call 'talent'. Can a child without discipline and unwilling to study hard be regarded as being talented? He might be, but that's not enough. First of all, for me, he should be able to convey feeling. I once had a student, a girl, who was very musical, but there was not even one right note in her playing. She could play quite fast. That is, she had very strong, fast and flexible hands. She lacked concentration. One needs to be tolerant and ignore feelings and the brain completely, because they spring from higher notions and should be disciplined. As for fitness, it is not regarded as necessary when you are devoted to whatever you do. Gilbert was crippled and he couldn't even press the pedal but he is a renowned pianist. Chopin too was suffering from tuberculosis but he played the piano in a way that made him world famous. Physical fitness may be the last thing to be needed if you have pathos, love and affection for whatever you do. I find this very important. J, for instance, lacks those things although she is a hard worker. During her preparation for her diploma exams she never went out, and did not even answer phone calls. She devoted herself to her studies. But there is no passion in her playing.
17. **G. M.:** *Has C made any progress since I last saw her?*
18. **G:** She was in France for one month. She wanted to sit for an exam at the Conservatoire. She wasn't well prepared. I wanted her to do that to see what goes on there. Since she was immature and well off, I wanted her to go there – mind you, her sister is studying in Paris – to find out if she could cope with it. Now she has a lot of

doubts about herself. That is exactly what I wanted. So I was right to let her go. The first thing she told me when she returned was that she did not intend to sit for an exam at the Conservatoire in the future. I had told her at that time that I was sure she had no chance of passing, since she was totally unprepared for it. Well, I even told her that if there was a teacher who fell in love with her, or in some way liked her playing, and admitted, 'I want this girl in my class', well, that's another story. I categorically told her, 'you are not going to pass, but you'll have the chance of finding out where you stand'. She herself, however, believed that she would be successful so she was not aware of her abilities. Anyhow she came back with a lot of doubts. She insisted on saying 'I will not take an exam again at the Conservatoire, but if I did, I would aim to get a pass, not just to sit for an exam'. But then she told me that she had talked to her father about whether she could stand so many hours of studying. This I regard as remarkable. She gained something from her stay in Paris. Because up to now she had been a daydreamer. She thought she could become a pianist without trying hard. She had graduated from Lyceum and thought that it would be best for her not to sit for the music degree, in order to improve her repertoire. She couldn't manage to cope even with the pieces prescribed for the degree. You have to have a definite target and aim at it.

**19. G. M.:** *Would you specify the motives that make children take up music lessons at a conservatory?*

**20. G:** A attends the conservatory and, having graduated from University, she can't get a job yet. So she says to herself, 'let's continue with the piano studies and get one more degree'. J, who had dropped out, came back again. I think she is really interested in music. She, however, is very ambitious, but she needs another two years before she can play these pieces and get somewhere, so that people say to her 'oh, how well you play!' I always get the impression that for obtaining the diploma, you usually need to study new pieces. She, on the contrary, wants to do them again! That's queer as far as I am concerned, and her choosing the pieces appears to be odd. You see, she makes her own choice with the pieces. And when I suggested she should play something new from Brahms, she chose Liszt but not Brahms. I made an attempt to persuade her to play Brahms, as she would learn a lot of things from

him. She refused to do it. Liszt was her choice again. She has never played either Schumann or Brahms.

21. **G. M.:** *Do you usually work out a plan for what your students are likely to play?*

22. **G:** First of all, if they are taking a diploma or degree exam I always let them have their own choice in the kind of pieces they want to study, as it is quite common for them to be working on them for at least two years. There are quite often times, unfortunately, when I am proved wrong in my attitude towards them. What I mean is that they ask for a lot more difficult things, and with me being lenient, they are likely to enter a labyrinth. But we find our way out usually, since they enjoy the pieces wholeheartedly. When it comes to the final exams you just cannot bear the burden of the repertoire. Do you get me? So I have the feeling that some children have been confused because of me letting them play whatever they had chosen from the beginning. It seems that as time passes I myself mature. If I insisted on J – who, mind you, is thirty years old – playing Brahms it would not mean anything at all to her. I would never let her play anything that she doesn't like. This is why I get carried away and let them have their own way.

## **G2 J: GERSHWIN, RHAPSODY IN BLUE**

23. **G. M.:** *What were you trying to draw out of this excerpt?*

24. **G:** J had dropped out of her piano studies about seven years ago. During those seven years she was attending a jazz course with Kontrafouris, the best jazz teacher we have in Greece, I think. I personally just don't have that specific jazz feeling, although I like it very much. I just can't play this kind of music. I can, however, understand it. But with this piece that J was playing, although she handles jazz pieces quite well, I was annoyed at the way she was playing it, as if it was a classical one. She didn't give the rhythmic element that was necessary and that J was capable of expressing. It was quite obvious that she played everything in the same way, and she does this whatever she lays her hands on. I don't know whether it is her hands or her disposition that brings this result. There are no alternatives for her, I am afraid to say. You have to pinpoint for her what to play at every moment. You have to do the same for all students ultimately.

25. **G. M.:** *You consistently emphasised to J and C that every phrase should be looked upon as something new, and that both girls should make it stand out during their performance. What were you driving at?*
26. **G:** Rhapsody in Blue is a piece with numerous themes. They cannot be played in the same mood. One is passionate, another tense and yet another a lot more relaxed. There are a lot of themes, it is true. Well, J played them in the same mood. On the other hand, if someone manages to express this variety there might be a danger of it losing its unity. So we have to combine both variety and unity. You have to find the best way of performing it to reach the stage you're looking for. In this particular piece you had to change your mood without losing its unity. The way J was playing it, was so monotonous that it upset me. If it were a piece of my repertoire I would have played it and she would have been able to understand it immediately. The change would have been quite clear. That's why a teacher should always try to assign pieces of music to his students that he himself is familiar with.
27. **G. M.:** *As a rule, you play all the pieces that your students study. By the way, I'd like to ask you about a certain movement that you made during the sessions I was present at. By gesticulating in a relaxed manner were you trying to make your students follow you or was it something instinctive?*
28. **G:** I believe in this kind of relaxed manner, regarding the hands as well as the body. But as for the aforesaid, I do it unintentionally. Although I do believe in such loose playing, I am not sure whether the way I try to demonstrate it is appropriate. I am still thinking about it. It seems I haven't become a fully-fledged teacher yet. I hesitate between this looseness and the quality of sound, trying to decide whether to start from the former or the latter. That is, should I put the stress on the sound and completely ignore the body posture? It looks as if the sound has the upper hand. If, for example, I tell a student to try to produce a particularly soft sound, he'll try to find the solution without my help. I have had one student for four years who never managed to relax. It is no use insisting on making her do it. I have come to the conclusion then that music should come first. As for A, since she was a new student in my class, I told her right from the start to relax. She has succeeded in doing it. For a child who's been with me for so long and still hasn't managed to do it, I must find another way. Most of my students are not so stiffened up. D, because of her fifth

finger, as I have already explained to you, as well as C, hasn't got rid of it. If a person sets off to understand the piece musically and says to himself, 'I don't like this sound', he will himself find a way to play it.

29. **G. M.:** *In your teaching it was apparent that you emphasised the importance of sound quality. You combine both elements of sound and looseness, don't you?*

30. **G:** Yes, although I could have talked only about the sound and let the learner find out about looseness for himself. This could be an alibi for him. What I mean is that he may succeed in relaxing and finally fail in sound. Anyway, if I demonstrate the sound, he should be able to find it himself.

31. **G. M.:** *In this excerpt and in most of your sessions I noticed that you always advised your students to sing, whereas you yourself conducted as if you were a real orchestra conductor. Are there any specific reasons for doing this?*

32. **G:** I would have sung myself, but I don't possess a good voice. I believe that singing can show them the fundamental elements of what should be heard from a piano. As for conducting I would definitely like to possess some knowledge of it, as I am really convinced that this helps the learner a lot. That is, he comes into direct contact with the idea of what he must play. If I could move my hands like a real conductor, and at the same time make them understand the pianissimo as well the phrase, I honestly believe that I could have helped them a lot more.

33. **G. M.:** *It seems that you stood firmly by dynamics, forte, piano, pauses, legato, staccato and anything else written in the score.*

34. **G:** All teachers keep on insisting on those aspects. Sometimes I get disappointed when the score edition is not suitable, but I don't make them buy another one. But I must admit that I am little biased against Italian editions. Nevertheless, if the edition is wrong at some point, I can change it if I don't like it. For instance, in those Italian editions, when it says 'diminuendo' and I don't like it, I say, 'make a crescendo here, or just don't do anything' [she laughs]. In addition, the original editions, which all teachers consider important for the children, usually become terribly hard to understand. There are no footnotes or any remarks made on them.



35. **G. M.:** *I am happy to say that most of your students are very harsh critics of themselves. How would you explain that?*
36. **G:** Even A possesses this characteristic, although she is a new student in my class and hasn't acclimatised herself to us yet. It could be the case that the piano itself is a very difficult instrument and they have to be hard on themselves and be rarely satisfied with what they are playing.
37. **G. M.:** *Even you yourself have this kind of doubt about whether what you are teaching is proper. In what way and to what extent, do you think, this affects your teaching?*
38. **G:** I continuously and continually change my decisions about the way I should teach. I firmly stand by some beliefs, but if on the way I find out that another method would improve something, I do definitely adopt it; a new hand or body movement, or a way of studying. For instance, I have learnt a new method by Fleisher. He is one of the greatest teachers of all, and his students quite often win international music awards and are renowned for their musicality. Fleisher had his own way of making the pianissimo, which had never been known before. Even Ganef [a famous piano teacher] did not know it. That is to say, when you play fast and have to do a pianissimo, it's likely that you will miss most of the notes. Fleisher tells you at the beginning to play it. If you don't possess strong fingers he tells you to begin playing forcefully, in order to get your fingers strengthened. Then says, 'now play it without the slightest sound', and afterwards he lets you re-play it allowing some notes to be heard. After having played it for four to six times, depending on your technique, of course, all the notes come out a lot clearer in pianissimo.
39. There are cases when a pianist has to play a melody with one hand, and with the other one to play pianissimo, so as not to let the melody overflow. On such occasions this method is very helpful, or when you have a trill or a gruppetto where they must be light, but at the same time you must make all the notes heard. This is what impressed me most. I just tried it out with some children and it came out well. When I hear about a different method, I try it out on myself, and if it does what I

want, I adopt it whenever required. What I mean is that I make it a part of my curriculum.

40. **G. M.:** *As for the technique, I noticed that you recommended the slow study, study with separate hands, and study with a metronome, and in general the common studies that most teachers suggest. Would you have any methodological procedures capable of solving most of the difficulties pianists are faced with?*

41. **G:** For difficult things I recommend a study that I call 'hammers'. What I mean is lifting your fingers just before touching the keyboard and keeping them loose. To get this you need to lift each finger at the very last moment and with great speed and let it fall on the keyboard, thus avoiding finger stiffness at the time. So you get a natural movement. I call it 'hammers' because the sound produced in that way is somehow coarse.

42. There is another method for legato. You play the notes a lot closer to the keyboard, moving your elbow in such a way that it makes an imaginary circle. As you play legato and close to the keyboard, the sound produced is softer and pleasanter. The elbow will follow the fingers, if the hand is really loose. What I mean is, you should start the move from the finger, and the elbow or the fist will follow. What you should concentrate on is how to put the weight of your hand on the tip of your finger. If you do the exercise wrong you may hurt your hand. My teacher in Munich described this exercise to me only once and never again. I understood the movement but I ignored the placing of the weight of my hand on the tip of my finger. The result was that I really 'butchered' my hand. If you don't keep a firm control over what you are teaching and the way the learner comprehends it, you run the risk of being injured. If I don't keep that control over everything, suggesting the 'hammers' method to my students may cause finger stiffness.

43. **G. M.:** *Having studied in Germany, do you belong in any way to the 'German Music School'?*

44. **G:** No, definitely not, as my teacher there didn't adopt a directive line, and when I came back I was still very stiffened. This could be the reason why I keep on talking about looseness. Even then, at least I was aware of the fact that I kept on getting stiff, whereas most of my students do not understand this. I felt that I wanted to

produce more volume, or pianissimo, but to be clearly heard, and although I came back from Munich when I was twenty two or twenty three, I was not yet relaxed. In other words, I came back as stiff as when I went there. I never managed to loosen up there. I met a teacher from Vienna, who wasn't a pianist; she was a violinist, but had adapted the violin technique to the piano. And why not? Well, looking at it now, I find that all instruments require the same things, such as strong fingers, a loosely clenched fist, and a free arm from the shoulder downwards. That teacher taught me to loosen up. Unfortunately, I only stayed with her for a very short time because she fell ill and had to return to Vienna.

45. Afterwards, I learned the 'hammers' method, which I regard as very useful. Personally I like it and it suits me. Like the method I told you about where the elbow makes the imaginative circle.

46. **G. M.:** *Have any of your teachers particularly affected your way of teaching?*

47. **G:** That Viennese teacher, I told you a while ago, did affect me more than anyone else. My teacher in Munich I thought highly of, because he was a really good pianist. He was regarded as one of the best pianists in Germany. I was only nineteen then. I met a good pianist and wanted to catch up with him. As for the stiffness that he never managed to mend, this usually happens to students. The majority of students find it hard to get rid of their stiffness, although both teacher and learner have consistently kept on trying. This is because you realise what 'stiffness' means, when you finally succeed in loosening up. Only then do you become conscious that you have never played so well due to your having been stiff.

48. There is a case of a little girl in the other conservatory where I teach, who wanted to take part in a competition and, although she had never studied hard before, she then started studying hard for six hours a day for fifteen days. I used to say to her during every session, 'do not keep your thumb hard' (by the way, she had a small hand). She used to answer back, 'I am not stiff'. In the end, because of her long hard study within such a short time, she pulled muscles. I told her, 'look after your hand, because it is important to loosen up'. It was as if I had ordered her to stiffen up, because she did exactly the opposite. She used to help an uncle of hers in his restaurant. She used to lift heavy things and to do all the chores there. Now she is

having a lot of trouble, although more than a year has elapsed since then. She hasn't got over it yet.

49. As for me, I then realised that I was going wrong somewhere, since I didn't like the sound I produced. I knew that I wanted to bring out something else instead. I didn't realise that I myself had some kind of stiffness. Whatever I listened to wasn't what I wanted. The sound wasn't what it should be.

50. **G. M.:** *Do you want to add anything regarding this excerpt?*

51. **G:** No, I think I've said a lot, and actually I got carried away. Let's go onto the next child.

**G3 K: BEETHOVEN, SONATA ('MOONLIGHT'), OPUS 27, N. 2, PRESTO  
AGITATO, IN C SHARP MINOR**

52. **G. M.:** *What exactly puzzled you in K's lesson?*

53. **G:** K is quite weak and her body structure isn't what it should be. She is a poor girl, who to make ends meet has to work night shift at a piano bar. Some time before she had been attending another conservatory and managed to get a degree there. Later she attended private lessons with another teacher but soon gave it up since she couldn't afford it. Then someone recommended her to me. I was familiar with her financial state, so I charged her as little as possible. Unfortunately, shortly afterwards her father died, and she was left without any financial support. So she had to give it up, as she wasn't working at that time. Now that she has started working, she came to me to get her diploma.

54. She is not actually studying as she should. You see she is still faced with a lot of difficulties. When you have to work, you have no money, you have lost one parent, and the other is ill, what can you do? She is, nevertheless, a talented person. She is skilful. I believe that if she studies hard, she might be able to manage it. I am afraid she has no culture at all. You may have noticed it, as it is crystal-clear. She might not even know Stravinsky. For someone to become a musician, culture and some knowledge beyond music is a must. However this drawback doesn't come out when she is playing a piece that she has learnt perfectly. This is odd, really. She might not

be able to tell you who Elytis, Seferis [Greek Nobel poets], or Goethe are. It's unbelievable!

55. **G. M.:** *You were preparing her at that time for a music competition. What is your opinion generally of competitions?*

56. **G:** She wanted to take part and I let her go. I let K go for the same reason as I did with C for her Paris trip. I did it on purpose, because there are two options. First to get disappointed and quit, if, that is, you don't really love the piano, or secondly just confess, 'I am not worth much, but I have to keep on trying and improve myself, since I cannot part with music, as it is my very life'.

57. Once my husband helped me just to express what I think in a case with a girl, who was the daughter of a teacher of mine, who was studying at the 'National Conservatory'. She was a girl who not only had bad teacher, but also hadn't any talent at all herself. I advised her to take up lessons with another teacher. She did so, but I was wondering whether to tell her father that his daughter was completely untalented, or whether to keep the truth from him. My husband, on the other hand, was of the opinion that, since the girl had already decided to take up music professionally, and since she liked it very much, she could sometime in the future become a good teacher or play chamber music. There are a lot of opportunities in many other music posts, apart from becoming a piano performer. And he was right. Why should you tell someone that a person is not worth a penny? If you yourself are not conscious of that, why should someone else tell you? The only thing it would do is put you off.

58. I have another girl in the other conservatory who, although she had got a degree, could not get a diploma. She has been one of the worst teaching experiences I have ever had. She couldn't even understand what she was supposed to express. I believe that a good technique can be acquired by anyone. But I see there are a few learners who cannot get even that. It's not a large proportion. It might be only something like one per cent. That girl finally became one of the best music theory teachers, and quite often accompanies other musicians, and she is very happy about it. She is a colleague of mine at present.

59. **G. M.:** *Regarding the preparation for a concert or a competition, as is the case with K, what steps do you take towards coping with the nervousness or anything else that has to do with proper preparation for a performance?*

60. **G:** As for the nervousness, if you have it, you have it. What I actually try to do is make them get to know the pieces so well that, even when nervous, they can play them. I just mark some points where they have to make their own starting points, if they get lost. I aim at them getting the whole structure. When a certain phrase or harmony changes, I put a separating mark, so that they are led to start from that point as if the piece begins just there. So no matter how nervous they are, they have the structure of the piece in their mind, and even if they miss their notes they will be able to continue. Most of the time I insist on that but a number of them do not take any notice. If you have nervousness, you have it. Even I myself have that kind of nervousness. If I am not absolutely sure of the piece, I do not feel very comfortable. Fortunately, [touch wood!] I haven't ever interrupted any performance at a concert. But I am really tormented because of my nervousness.

61. So we come to the conclusion that for the preparation for a performance, I believe, the secret is to be thoroughly prepared to face whatever might unexpectedly pop up.

62. **G. M.:** *Would you have anything to add about K's excerpt?*

63. **G:** Well, let me tell you. K may be able to play the piano quite well. She has to study systematically, and furthermore to strengthen her fingers because, as I said before, they are a little feeble. It would also be a good thing to do something in the way of culture. It is very important for a person to possess additional knowledge besides that of playing the piano, in order to be able to express the ideas of every piece one is performing.

64. **G. M.:** *Would you add anything to that or shall we carry on?*

65. **G:** Let's go to the next student.

**G4 A: CHOPIN, PRELUDE, OPUS 28, N. 5, IN D MAJOR**

66. **G. M.:** *Would you be kind enough to tell me something about A, and furthermore, what were you trying to get out of this excerpt?*
67. **G:** A graduated from the University of Salonica. She is a new student in my class. What I don't like about her piano playing is her wrong accentuation. That's why I was telling her that for classical music we accent the first note of the bar, whereas in romantic music we may not. Actually, in classical music we don't definitely accent the first note of every bar. We just accent according to the intonation of the phrase. I simply singled out one fact to make it more emphatic. In classical music, the accentuation of the bar doesn't strike you in a harsh way, as it does with romantic music. I have changed my way of teaching with her now. I told her that before beginning playing any piece we would have to start with technique, as it was one of the things she falls short in. She can't play even the simplest pieces.
68. **G. M.:** *What means of exercising do you advise her to adopt in order to better her technique?*
69. **G:** I have asked her to study the scales daily. I don't ask her to play them every lesson, but, whenever I ask her to, she does it extremely well. At the 'Athenaeum Conservatory' it is a rule that at a certain time a teacher has to listen to the scales played by another teacher's students. One teacher keeps a check on the students of another teacher as far as the scales are concerned. Thus scales are not one of the compulsory exam subjects, as they are at the 'Conservatory of Athens'.
70. **G. M.:** *Taking into consideration this lesson as well as all the others I was present at, it appeared to me (and correct me if I am wrong) that you focus your interest on the time of composition and the composer of the piece in order to convey the best possible meaning of the piece to the student. Do you therefore believe that the notions of the piece can be taught?*

**71. G:** Everything can be taught. Even the music phrase is taught. If the learner has nothing to offer that comes from his own inner world to that particular phrase, then the phrase might be the right one but at the same time, there is a gap and indifference in it. The Orientals play this perfectly, I think, but, as far as I am concerned, this doesn't offer anything if it doesn't succeed in conveying a deeper meaning. I think that even this can be learnt. It is, however, a matter of what suits the pianist's idiosyncrasies. French musicians, for instance, are not my cup of tea. I can play them and I know how I should deal with them. But they just don't suit me. Neither does Chopin in a way. I think that I may never be able to convey their meanings exactly.

**72. G. M.:** *As for teaching a composer's deeper notions, would you single out one whom you regard as the most difficult?*

**73. G:** You either can or cannot play Chopin. You can teach him though. If you don't understand him right deep inside you and he doesn't appeal to you, you cannot play him. You remember that student of mine who I call 'shoddy and slatternly'. If you ask her to play a Chopin phrase, she'll perform it wonderfully. It suits her perfectly. It's a matter of idiosyncrasies. Beethoven, for instance, would be very hard for many children who do not possess concentration and a good brain. He may be even the hardest of them all. As for me, even Bach is a lot easier than Beethoven. A lot of talented people cannot cope with Beethoven's structure. You see, his phrases change a lot. They cut his pieces into smaller pieces, miss his rhythm, or make his meanings either romantic or concrete. Beethoven is unbelievably hard. He's the hardest composer. We're talking about achieving a high level of performance of his pieces, of course. You could play Mozart a lot more easily than Beethoven. You either have a deep insight into Beethoven or you don't.

**74. G. M.:** *Is there anything to be added, do you think, to this excerpt?*

**75. G:** No, no. We have already talked a lot about it, as well as about A.

#### **G5 C: CHOPIN, ETUDE, OPUS 10, N. 8, IN F MAJOR**

**76. G. M.:** *Now I was wondering what you were trying to get out of this excerpt?*



77. **G:** I thought that she was really not doing well with this particular piece, and mind you, this wasn't one of her first lessons. She had been playing it for quite some time, but had not reached a satisfactory standard. She started doing it even before the summer. That's why I was upset. What I get annoyed with is her indifference to setting a target for her life. I should have told her that within fifteen days you should bring me your assignment at such and such a tempo. Isn't that what I should have done? She had to make up her mind about the way she was going to study, so that she could bring it to a point (that is to get a lot faster and more expressive) but she does not do it. So we keep on coming back repeatedly to the same things again and again. That is, we don't make any progress with the piece. That's what really drives me mad with C. But D doesn't do that.
78. On top of that, her hands are not in the position they should be. Her arms are not loosened up, nor are her thumbs free enough. She's got a marvellous long hand but spreads it like this [she extended her hand on the table like a kind of air-fan]. She never starts looking for the right quality of sound. I believe that, especially for C, I should start, every time we play a piece, with the quality of her sound. Once she had a lesson with the Ganevi [a couple of well-known piano teachers] at a seminar. This couple is very interesting as far as music is concerned. They are really superb, and I really like them. Well, C, as we said before, had a lesson with them, but even those two wonderful tutors couldn't make her understand that she must always look for the right sound. She didn't even manage to control her hand position based on the sound. I regard the quality of sound as the number one prerequisite. Can you imagine what I'm doing with her now? An exercise that I really don't like at all: 'the harnessed notes'. I was compelled to tell C to take up this kind of study in the hope that she would get the help that she badly needs. I was never in favour of this exercise. I just wonder and ask myself, 'will I be successful?' She brings me to the point where I look deeply into myself and at the same time have my doubts.
79. **G. M.:** *You also seem to focus your interest on the preparation, that is, before a note or a pause is activated. I understood that you are rather keen on the thoughts of the performer prior to every movement, aren't you?*
80. **G:** There are two kinds of preparation. First, the one that usually takes place with Beethoven's pieces. He uses all the time 'subito forte', or 'subito piano'. If you just

do forte-piano then you get a rather routine work. There should be a slight gap, as long as a short breath, between two dynamics. So that this 'subito piano' will have a meaning. You are not allowed to do such a piano just because the composer tells you, without having any feeling about the reason for its existence.

81. Then we come to the preparation of the hands. You have all five notes prepared, although you might have to start from the first one. You are not supposed to play only the doh. You have to have a hand ready to play four or five notes. That's what I regard as preparation. You do this especially with notes far apart. That is playing two notes with a distance between them, the hand must be prepared to strike the second note. When it comes to having to play it at a faster tempo, if you have ignored studying this procedure, nothing comes out right. There must be a combination of quick movements of the hands and of the brain. You have to know that you move from doh to soh and then to te. It is something that both the hands and the brain are conscious of right from the start.

82. **G. M.:** *Would you suggest practising away from the piano as well?*

83. **G:** That's ideal! It's very hard for students, however, that's why I don't insist on it. I did it once when I was preparing for a recital and I lost a lot of time, as I had to be a member of a committee at an international piano competition. Because I was running short of time I didn't feel confident about piano playing by heart. On the eve of the recital, instead of playing on the piano, I just sat down in my armchair away from the piano and shut my eyes. Well, I was supposed to play a Sonata by Brahms in F Minor, which I was really scared of. Ah, well, instead of playing I sat there and meditated. I kept on brooding over it for two and a half. Then, I tried to think what the left hand plays, and I felt that I had really forgotten what exactly it should do. It's been proved that that was the best study that I could ever have done at that given moment. I have asked many students to do the same, but I dare not insist on it, since I myself never do it systematically, although I know how important it is.

84. **G. M.:** *Do you have anything to add to this?*

85. **G:** No, we've finished, so let's carry on with M.

## G6 M: ANTONIOU, SYLLABLES (GREEK COMPOSER)

86. **G. M.:** *Taking as a subject the Greek composer's extraordinary piece that M was playing I would like to ask you on what criteria you base your choice of the repertoire?*
87. **G:** M chose this piece because she heard it when I was performing it at a concert. It was for 'a night of contemporary music'. You see, she is interested in composing music and she asked me to play it. Another student from one of the conservatories I teach at, asked for it as well. She thought that in this kind of music her mistakes wouldn't come out in the open. If you want to play something well, your mistakes cannot go unnoticed, although laymen may not pick them up. Not even experts in music could do so either, if they hear it for the first time, of course. Everybody would recognise the good quality of your playing. Only those who have never heard it before perhaps, won't be able to recognise any mistakes.
88. There are only a few conservatories which ask students to perform such pieces. For instance, at the 'Philippos Nakas Conservatory' and the 'Synchrono', the present directors and their predecessors were modern composers. So they might not compel students to play such music, but would not object to it in their classrooms. In the 'Conservatory of Athens' there is a chance that they may accept pieces of music by Skalkottas as occasional performances, but not one as modern as Antoniou.
89. **G. M.:** *In this excerpt, you spent quite some time on the use of the pedal. Would you be kind enough to tell me about it?*
90. **G:** Especially in this piece, Antoniou himself would want a pedal to allow the chords to be heard, or at other times one note played to have the harmonic sounds of the other one. The pedal is usually jotted down in the score by the composer. In Bach, I think it would not be right to press the pedal right to the bottom. I would say it would be better if you pressed it halfway down, in order that the chord may free itself a little, but not completely. The pedal seems to me to be a serious matter. I ask the children who have difficulties to practise scales or arpeggios on it. That is, I ask them to let the pedal go free every two or three notes, so their feet get used to it. The pedal might be noted in the score, but if you don't attentively follow the sound – I

mean what is heard within a fraction of a second (before or after it) – then you have failed.

91. **G. M.:** *As regards M, what would your comments be about her and this particular session?*

92. **G:** M is very industrious, but what I don't like about her is the way she moves her body when she plays. I think it would have been a good thing for her if she could see herself video-recorded, because it could help her. She has to learn to stop making superfluous body movements as this spoils her whole image and, at the same time, quite often hinders her from expressing the composer's notions. By the way, she was, and still is, quite good at this piece of Antoniou. Besides, it's a piece that she liked very much.

**G7 A: BACH, PRELUDE FROM 'THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER', VOL. 1, IN G MINOR**

93. **G. M.:** *What were you actually aiming at with this performance?*

94. **G:** A moved to Salonica and when she came back she had forgotten to some extent whatever she had learnt. That's a blunder. Since she is not prepared to study hard, at least she should have tried to keep the best points she had reached, so that she could make some kind of progress, no matter how small that might be. Besides, I was upset about the way she accentuated. She should have done that on every other note and have made a small crescendo that could lead her somewhere. She didn't follow the harmonic progression of the piece. Neither her sound, nor her legato, nor even her staccato were in position. As for the tempo, she always tended to accelerate and gather speed. To make things worse, her fingers were not as well-trained as the piece demanded.

95. **G. M.:** *I was impressed by the fact that although the piece was not performed at a good standard you insisted on her setting everything right at the same time. What would you say about that?*

96. **G:** You see, this attitude of mine has done her good. She didn't manage to get this piece right, but began being careful with her phrases. When she first came to my

class she didn't have a clue about dynamics. She would bring me an etude, for example, or a Bach piece without any dynamics at all. Everything was flat. She used to ask me, 'do I have to start so early? Let me learn the notes first, and then we'll see to the rest'. Now, fortunately, in whatever piece she brings along, generally she has made an attempt to include everything. That is, the phrases, the dynamics, the legato, the structure, the expression and whatever is in the book. She has started to become careful. It's a case of you getting some kind of result if you insist on it. You don't get a full helping, of course, but you get something out of it.

97. **G. M.:** *As for A, what are your expectations for her in the near future?*

98. **G:** I would want her to get a good degree. I don't think she is fortunate enough as far as physical endowments are concerned, so a degree will satisfy her ambitions. I don't talk about a good diploma, of course. She may manage to get only a mediocre one.

99. **G. M.:** *Now, about the rest of your children, what do you expect from them?*

100. **G:** Their abilities, as well as their personalities, count a lot in this respect. I think that J may be able to make a fair career, but nothing outstanding. For the rest of my students I'll be content with them just managing to play well, but I don't think they are capable of making a career as pianists. J is very industrious. She was once a student at the 'Conservatory of Athens', but it was so hard for her that she had to leave. Moreover, she had some personal troubles. She couldn't cope with her personal problems and the demanding conditions. Well, if you ask her, of course, she'll say that she didn't have the right teacher. If that was the case, she could have chosen another teacher and continued. But she abandoned piano studies for about seven years, so it must have been because of her trouble and the austere atmosphere of the 'Conservatory of Athens'.

101. **G. M.:** *Do you believe that this austerity at the 'Conservatory of Athens' contributes towards students' progress?*

102. **G:** For me, it sounds unfair but, on the other hand, all the students at the 'Conservatory of Athens' become good piano players, so you must draw your own conclusions.

103. **G. M.:** *Could it be that the students of that particular Conservatory are determined to take music seriously?*

104. **G:** That is the case for all the children who start there. I have thought about that. You must bear in mind that not long ago the selection of students to study at this conservatory was a lot stricter than it is nowadays. Now it is rather lenient, especially in the entrance exams, since the number of children applying has generally dropped a lot. Once two of my students, who now study in Germany, said to me, 'One teacher in Germany has some brilliant students'. Yes, but he picked out the best among all those who sat for the exams. So you cannot tell to what extent the progress of a child depends on the conservatory or the teacher, or if it is the result of the student's own talent and industriousness. Besides the student's parents affect their progress. There are cases of parents who pressure their children into learning the piano, but other cases where they are very negative. Some of them do not show any understanding at all. They ask for their children to get the Proficiency Certificate in English at the age of fifteen, and press them hard to study two or three languages at the same time. Thus they ask them to study at least two foreign languages, plus private lessons on their school subjects, and on top of that the piano. They expect their children to be competent at all the other subjects apart from the piano. They are only interested in seeing them successful in everything else but the piano. My opinion is that they should take up only one language, and a second one can be learnt at a later stage. The hands are moulded, trained and formed properly at an early age. When you have reached the age of eighteen, your hands cannot be changed. This is the deadline. If you have reached it, you can't go beyond that, I am afraid. Parents cannot understand this. They seem to demand things beyond their children's abilities and, at the same time, want them to be perfect with such things. They even get cross when their children get credit marks and not distinctions! Can you imagine that? Unfortunately, everything cannot be done at the same time. There are priorities for a child and his studies. I must confess here that parents, in a general sense, drive me mad. On the other hand, they are the ones who are responsible for sending them to a conservatory at an early age. Now, I just wonder why they push them towards such a school. I've come to the conclusion that they do it for some kind of social recognition, and not for the true love of music. This must be the case with A. So when the first sign of trouble occurs, they don't stand by their children

fully aware of their position. In practice the parents' attitude is positive. They take the initiative in sending them to a conservatory. In reality, however, they do not view it in the right way in their expectations, that is to see it as a kind of culture course, even if their child does not become a pianist. For the very same reasons students who study at the University and study piano at home for not more than once a week take it for granted that they are entitled to a degree, because they are made to think that they have to be paid for their toil. And how are they going to be compensated? Ah well, they usually claim, 'we cannot let such a long time be wasted. We are entitled to a piano degree'. They forget one important thing. They have never actually studied, as they should have. Where does this state of mind come from? From their parents, of course. I am sure that they push them and instil in them that sort of mentality. When you come to think of it, there are those two weekly hours that they devote to study (which are not enough) and there is my repeated insistence 'don't sit for a degree', whatever scruples they have (they should have, shouldn't they?) and the anguish of the impending degree. Why should they go through that torment, can you tell me?

105. **G. M.:** *I wish I could go on with some more general questions, but I'd like first to ask you if you have anything to add to whatever we have said about A.*

106. **G:** No, not a thing. Let's carry on.

#### GENERAL QUESTIONS

107. **G. M.:** *How would you explain this mass preference for popular music, the educational system that compels students to do extra private lessons on the school subjects, and many other factors in relation to a child's progress in music?*

108. **G:** Two years ago a music teacher at a conservatory where I worked was sensible enough to ask all the students what music they were listening to. Children from ten to twelve years old said that they listened to popular Greek composers and singers, but not even one listened to classical music. After twelve they said they listened to a higher standard of music [laughs] and from fifteen onwards just a little bit of classical music. So this means that we teach them something at the conservatory. From then on it depends on the student. For instance, once I asked

some of my students if they had heard the music they were playing either at a concert or recording, and they all admitted they hadn't. They never thought of listening to it.

109. **G. M.:** *I noticed that during your lessons you asked your students if they had listened to pieces they were studying.*

110. **G:** I don't recommend it just for the sake of imitating the pianists but just to be aware how it is played; to have a target.

111. **G. M.:** *How would you describe good playing?*

112. **G:** Let me tell you a simple thing. I ask for something to move me. It's simple, isn't it? That is, if someone has great technique in his playing, I will admire and envy him, but I can vividly remember all the concerts that really impressed me. For instance, Richter's and those of two or three more some time back. I am not interested only in their technique. I want myself to be moved. So far my students have moved me only two or three times. And it's important for me to be moved by a person I have taught and, at that very moment, to forget about all I taught him at my sessions and all the mistakes he probably made; and just get carried away by his magnificent playing.

113. **G. M.:** *Although your students are grown-ups your teaching is very expository if I may say so. If they were a lot younger what would you change in your teaching?*

114. **G:** I would find images and talk to them in an imaginative way. Besides, for those a lot younger I would have used words in the pieces they studied and I would ask them to add words in the following phrase. When a child responds to that, you get the superb feeling that it is worth your while to be a teacher. I would like them to learn that music is like a song. Unfortunately in Greece those two meanings have been separated. It may be that we don't have good piano methods. We fall short of a method with Greek songs in Thompson's style. I wish they could start off with songs that they like, so they could understand that music is sung.

115. **G. M.:** *How would you define a good teacher?*



116. **G:** For me, Fleisher is the best teacher I have ever met. He creates a kind of magic, not taking into account his music knowledge, of course. He is a magician. I once attended one of his seminars (it was the first time in my life that I met him) and I saw one of his students playing Chopin's first Ballade. Technically it was quite good but, as far as music is concerned, it was of a low standard. He didn't know how to create a phrase. Fleisher busied himself with only half of the first page for half an hour, and I said to myself 'what is he going to do now? Is he going to listen to this part and finish the lesson?' In the end, the child having managed to understand and to create this very phrase, he told him to play it again right from the start. He stood beside him and conducted him. You see he is an orchestra conductor too. Following his gestures and his intensity, the child played the whole Ballade in an excellent way, although he had been taught only half of the first page. It was really magic! This cannot happen with Julia Ganef, although I adore her. That is, the child doesn't play magically within an hour, but she herself is the magician! For me, the best teacher can be defined as the one who knows a wide variety of things, the one who can help the child in practice, clarity and, at the same time, inspire him.

117. **G. M.:** *Now, we come to a question that I would like to ask you regarding the relationship between a teacher and a student. On one occasion you admitted that you had your favourite students, but as far as I am concerned, I just couldn't see it at any moment during your teaching.*

118. **G:** Let us take A as an example. I must say that she is not my best student, my favourite that is. She is a new one, of course, but there are cases where I really take a liking to them at first sight. Students I really don't like are very rare. To tell you the truth, right deep in my heart, I don't consider her as my own student. All in all, however, most students I consider to be my own.

119. **G. M.:** *I believe that your relationship with your students is very deep. At one moment a somewhat upset student came to you. You completely ignored my presence with the video camera, interrupted your lesson, and didn't start again until you had made sure that her problem was solved.*

120. **G:** In general, I feel real love and affection for my children. I want them always to be in a good mood, otherwise there is no point in me talking about the piano.

They help me out a lot. Whenever I meet my friends, who are more or less of the same age and have no relationship with children other than their own, I myself feel a lot younger than them. I think that I keep on gaining a lot more from my students than they do from me, not just sentimentally, but also practically in every aspect of music learning. You do definitely learn a lot from a talented student. You may have acquired perfection in the 'Pathetique' Sonata as you have performed it so many times, but feel a kind of abhorrence towards it, and suddenly a student of yours starts playing it and you find yourself exclaiming something like, 'what a beautiful piece this is. It's worth studying again!' There are times, of course, when you play the 'Apassionata' and you have learnt everything intellectually, and just then a learner comes up with the remark, 'this is a very awkward piece. It simply freezes my mind'. You then go back to the old times and try to remember how you used to play it in an effort to persuade him that, in the end, it is a wonderful piece. That in some way revives you and makes you feel and think a lot younger.

121. **G. M.:** *To be honest, I was trying to learn about what music has to offer to students, but finally I learned what service the students offer to their teachers and music. Now, I would like to ask you just one more question about the music. What in your opinion has music to offer to learners?*

122. **G:** That cannot be described in words. Could anyone on Earth ever forget a piece of music that has had a really overwhelming influence on him? I am going to perform the Beethoven Sonata in D Major in Crete, which, as you know, includes a very magnificent slow part. That takes me back to the time when I was ten years old. I remember that I went through my mother's classical piano scores. She used to play pop music of that time, and I didn't pay much attention to the songs, but tried out the Beethoven easy pieces in the Minor. I vividly remember that I had at that time tried for the first time this part that I am going to play on the island of Crete. I can still recall how deeply I was moved when I first played it. The fact that I can play it so passionately that once someone in the audience told me that most of them were on the point of bursting into tears, is due to me recalling those intense feelings that I had at that time, and that's what I spontaneously bring out now. I believe music creates deeper and subtler feelings. It is quite often at the same time another form of illusion. It leads you towards a world that doesn't really exist. Don't you

think so? You want to go somewhere that's really inaccessible. It's like heading towards another life or making you eager to follow another route, but how can you get there, since it doesn't exist?

123. **G. M.:** *I have finished with whatever I wanted to ask you. If you have anything to tell me I am willing to listen. I thank you very much for your co-operation.*

124. **G:** I thank you, too.

