



# “The Harder I Practice, The Worse I Play” Getting Control Under Control

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# Getting Control Under Control

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- ❖ It's not a typo! Many of us think that we have to control everything.
- ❖ Conscious effort during performance is often the main cause of our faltering.
- ❖ How do we have confident, relaxed performance?
  - ❖ The “inner game”: learn to train (and then trust!) our subconscious mind.

# The Inner Game

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- ❖ W. Timothy Gallwey, *The Inner Game of Tennis*
- ❖ This is the game that takes place in the mind of the player, and it is played against such obstacles as lapses in concentration, nervousness, self-doubt and self-condemnation. In short, it is played to overcome all habits of mind which inhibit excellence in performance.



# The Inner Game

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- ❖ Achieve the art of concentration through learning internal skills (i.e., increased awareness without emotional response).
  - ❖ Learn to program your computer (Self 2) with images rather than instructing yourself with words.
  - ❖ Learn to trust Self 2 to do what you (Self 1, the conscious ego-mind) ask of it. This means letting Self 2 hit the ball.
  - ❖ Learn to see “non-judgmentally”—that is, to see what is happening rather than merely noticing how well or how badly it is happening. This overcomes “trying too hard.”



# The Inner Game

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- ❖ Achieve the art of concentration through learning internal skills (i.e., increased awareness without emotional response).
  - ❖ Step 1: Observe, non-judgmentally, existing behavior
  - ❖ Step 2: Ask yourself to change, programming with image and feel
  - ❖ Step 3: Let it happen!
  - ❖ Step 4: Non-judgmental, calm observation of the results, leading to continuing observation of process until behavior is automatic



# The Inner Game

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- ❖ The time for change comes when we realize that the same function could be served in a better way.
- ❖ By increasing the effective power of awareness, concentration allows us to throw more light on whatever we value knowing, and to that extent enables us to know and enjoy it more. This leads to continued learning.



# The Inner Game

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- ❖ How can we win the inner game?
- ❖ If we win or lose, we'll get a pat on the back (for different reasons) but life eventually goes back to normal.
- ❖ "Winning" can only take us so far, as there is always someone better than us.
- ❖ Focus instead on the process of growth, and seeing improved performance in yourself. In other words, enjoy the game.
- ❖ Remember why you started learning the organ.

# The Inner Game

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- ❖ Performance anxiety is selfishness. Never be apologetic. Share something beautiful that you care about.
  - ❖ FaceOff
- ❖ Play for others' enjoyment. Don't worry about what they're thinking of you.
  - ❖ Grandma
- ❖ We are our own worst enemy. **Everyone** is rooting for you! You should, too!



# Keyboard Practice Skills

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- ❖ Elaine Grover, *Keyboard Practice Skills*
  - ❖ Warm-Up Exercises
  - ❖ Creating a Practice Routine
  - ❖ Learning the Basics
  - ❖ Developing a Practice Mind
  - ❖ Using Practice Skills
  - ❖ Building Momentum



# Keyboard Practice Skills

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- ❖ Warm-Up Exercises
  - ❖ Relaxing and Stretching
  - ❖ Warm-up Stretches



# Keyboard Practice Skills

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- ❖ Creating a Practice Routine
  - ❖ Setting Up
  - ❖ Quieting (and Reducing Tension in the Body)
  - ❖ Beginning



# Keyboard Practice Skills

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- ❖ Learning the Basics
  - ❖ Fingering
  - ❖ Counting

# Keyboard Practice Skills

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- ❖ Developing a Practice Mind
  - ❖ Concentration
    - ❖ Interest
    - ❖ A Logical Practice Method
    - ❖ Enjoyment
  - ❖ Negatives and Positives



# Keyboard Practice Skills

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- ❖ Make every practice a success story! We usually feel good about that which we do well. Enjoyment often follows a sense of accomplishment, a job well done. Practice well every time, in order to leave with a feeling that your time and your mind were well spent. Two measures with fingering, rhythm, and a steady, even flow can be a success story. Set realistic expectations.



# Keyboard Practice Skills

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❖ Become aware of what hinders concentration:

- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Noise
- ❖ Faulty practice
- ❖ Worry
- ❖ Recovery from illness
- ❖ Overwork
- ❖ Staleness
- ❖ Lack of change

❖ Also be aware of what facilitates concentration:

- ❖ Calmness
- ❖ Relaxation
- ❖ Deadlines
- ❖ Enthusiasm for your music
- ❖ Newness of a piece
- ❖ Ability to control thoughts



# Keyboard Practice Skills

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## ❖ Using Practice Skills

- ❖ Slow Practice
- ❖ Metronome Work
- ❖ Rhythm Work
- ❖ “Silent” Mental Practice
- ❖ Dancing
- ❖ Singing
- ❖ Stop. Think. Place Routine
- ❖ Blocking
- ❖ Freeze and Set Practice
- ❖ Using Circles
- ❖ Repetition
- ❖ Using A Drill Strip
- ❖ Analysis
- ❖ Visualizing
- ❖ Silent Score Study
- ❖ Linking



# Keyboard Practice Skills

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## ❖ Building Momentum

- ❖ Momentum is that driving force which propels us onward to the music making. It captures us and draws us like a magnet. We lose track of time, unable to stop until we have mastered the music and made it our own.
- ❖ ...If your practice feels like drudgery you will soon stop learning. The key is to practice with a purpose, to come to enjoy the art of practicing, and to always give yourself something to look forward to in your practice. This is important!



# Practice Techniques

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- ❖ Richard Elliott, “Practice Techniques” in *OrganTutor Organ 101*, based on Daniel Kohut, *Musical Performance: Learning Theory and Pedagogy*
- ❖ Plan Your Practice
- ❖ Warm-Up Time
- ❖ Building Time
- ❖ Interpreting Time
- ❖ Performing Time

# Practice Techniques

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## ❖ Plan Your Practice

- ❖ Always have a plan for your practice periods; set long range, intermediate and immediate goals.
- ❖ Practice regularly.
- ❖ Piano practice is essential to good organ playing.



# Practice Techniques

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- ❖ Warm-Up Time

- ❖ ... for activating and preparing the brain and the muscles for the intense concentration and efficient coordination that will be needed later ... in the practice session.
- ❖ Begin slowly. Focus on the rudiments of playing.
- ❖ This is a good time for sight-reading new pieces.



# Practice Techniques

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## ❖ Building Time

- ❖ ... for the development of ... technique. It may include work on new scales, etudes, or other technical exercises. It can also include “working out” technical problems in music being prepared for performance.
- ❖ Practice on a clear and quick-speaking registration
- ❖ Slow practice is the golden key that unlocks the door to success. One should practice slowly enough to be in **complete control of every aspect of the music.**
- ❖ Dissect the music horizontally and vertically.



<b>Vierne</b>	<b>LH</b>	<b>RH</b>	<b>Ped.</b>	<b>LH/Ped</b>	<b>RH/Ped</b>	<b>LH/RH</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>105%</b>
<b>A</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>B</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>C</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>D</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>E</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>F</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>G</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>H</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>I</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>J</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>K</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>L</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>M</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>N</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>O</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>P</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>Q</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>R</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>S</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>T</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>U</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>V</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145
<b>W</b>	117	117	117	117	117	117	85	97	104	110	117	124	131	138	145





# Practice Techniques

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- ❖ Interpreting Time

- ❖ ... for the performer [to work] on performance literature that has been mastered technically but needs attention from an expressive standpoint.
- ❖ Mental practice can be very helpful. Conduct or dance.
- ❖ Silent practice to check for excessive tension or movement
- ❖ Sing one voice while playing all of the voices.

# Practice Techniques

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## ❖ Performing Time

- ❖ Playing the entire piece without stopping. ... The goal is to concentrate on the act of musical performance itself.
- ❖ Read ahead.
- ❖ Don't stop to correct mistakes! This destroys the flow of the music. Instead, use it as an opportunity to practice "graceful" recovery. Make a mental note of the section, and go back later.
- ❖ Listen!



# Some Closing Thoughts...

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- ❖ I think of practicing like digging a ditch; every day I get out my shovel and remove a little bit of dirt.
  - ❖ Rudolph Serkin, pianist
- ❖ A good practice day means you are one step closer to realizing a great performance but momentum must be constant. Just as a drop of water can erode great mountains, there is no technical or musical difficulty you cannot meet with constant dirt digging.
  - ❖ Jeanette Fishell, organist
- ❖ There's nothing a pencil and metronome won't fix.
  - ❖ Arthur Poister, organist
- ❖ There must be liberty with order. Where there is fantasy there must be logic and order.
  - ❖ Pablo Casals, cellist
- ❖ Try. Fail. Try again. Fail better.
  - ❖ Prunella Scales, actress



# Questions?

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- ❖ Richard Elliott, “Practice Techniques” in *OrganTutor Organ 101*
- ❖ W. Timothy Gallwey, *The Inner Game of Tennis*
- ❖ Elaine Grover, *Keyboard Practice Skills*
- ❖ Daniel Kohut, *Musical Performance: Learning Theory and Pedagogy*
  
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