

## QUOTATION

### ON MUSICAL CHAINS, CRABWISE<sup>1</sup>

If the [musical] piece is to be memorized in sections, I feel that the method endorsed by Czerny and his two pupils, Liszt and Leschetizky, is the best means of obtaining absolute security. That is, to learn the piece, start with the last two measures, then the last four measures, then the last eight measures, then the last twelve measures, and so on, proceeding backwards until the first measure is reached. One great advantage of "learning backwards" is that when the time to reproduce the work in public comes, the player then knows the measures ahead with more certainty, because they have been played more frequently. It is a kind of musical insurance that some nervous pupils cannot seem to do without.

In this method of "learning backwards," each section of the eight measures should be carefully checked. The method of checking to which I already referred may be done by putting eight markers (pencils, buttons, or checkers) on one side of the keyboard with each successive, perfect performance of a section. One of the markers should be moved to the other side of the keyboard until eight markers, representing eight consecutive flawless performances, have been moved. But if a mistake crops up, let us say, in the third repetition, all the markers must be moved back and a fresh start made. When four markers have been consecutively moved to the winning side of the piano, the section should be pretty thoroughly fixed in the player's memory.

This laborious method of memorizing and checking need not be tedious, for the player is working toward a goal, as in a game or a puzzle. The idea is very old and may even antedate Czerny, reaching back perhaps to the days of Beethoven. The system is much slower and with an impetuous, impatient pupil (the one who needs it most) can become very boring and irritating. On the other hand, students who cheerfully submit to this test drill rarely have difficulty at recitals. Moreover, there seems to come a time when memorizing a piece as a whole becomes very much easier. One pupil who rebelled at the test method of hearing a piece by sections, "crabwise," said later, "If it was good enough for Czerny, Leschetizky, and Liszt, it's good enough for me." He followed the plan until he had methodically built up a very large and extremely "ready" repertory.

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<sup>1</sup>From Cooke, James Francis. *How to memorize music*. Philadelphia: Theodore Presser Co., 1948, pp. 63-64. Contributed by F. J. Barrera, Department of Psychology, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, L8S 4K1, Canada.