

Jackie Sharp review

Instrumental technique is the enabler for other performing skills such as expression but it can be challenging to implement a structured developmental pedagogy for this. Jackie Sharp's *Purrfect Practice Technique Trainer* for piano technique offers a solution for this. In her method, the kinaesthetic and the aural are paired so that one informs the other and vice versa, helping to make playing enjoyable and musical.

The trainer can be implemented for a range of students, from early to advanced, and can also help teachers to revisit their own understanding of piano technique. Sharp presents all technique goals in four ways:- diagrams; worded explanations; notated exercises and videos. The combination of these make each goal very easy to understand and achievable for a variety of learners. Any notated exercises could be taught by demonstration so that the focus is on the movement and the sound rather than note-reading.

The basic of hand shape is covered first before moving on to exercises that implement expressive techniques, demonstrating the role of the wrist, elbow, and arm. These exercises include phrasing, staccato, balance, dynamics, and voicing. Technical challenges such as chord co-ordination, repetition, ornamentation, finger legato, rhythmical co-ordination and speed are also covered. Each technical goal is supported by clear reasoning and explanations from Sharp and students are encouraged to self-assess their achievements.

Sharp's book is attractively presented in a student-friendly way, is easily available as a PDF and also has embedded web-links for the valuable video demonstrations led by Sharp herself, making it beneficial as a digital book that students in this age of BYO devices can use on their tablets. The supporting images and design are attractive and help to clearly establish good and bad technique. There are a editorial problems in the publication, sometimes it's not clear whether the instructions are aimed at students or teachers, and the videos could be more professionally produced but teachers should not let this distract them from the excellent and very helpful aims of this method.

Purrfect Practice Technique Trainer 1 by Jackie Sharp (self-published) 2015.
www.purrfectpractice.com.au