

Herr Plimley Speaks...

I'll start from a very simple viewpoint. (Here we go.)
We know that here are the keys and here are our hands and fingers, OK?

One very important thing in playing the piano is that you want to strive for a complete, full contact with your fingers into the keys at the keyboard.

Hands and arms have weight. If you relax, there's weight.
You want to go down to the bottom of each key.

Now think of the hand area as a kind of centre of gravity...or mission control.

We have weight. We have a centre of gravity.
And we think of the fingers as being five independent hammers...little hammers.

Usually our fingers want to go straight up and down as we play:
the hand parallel to the keys, the fingers naturally curved...they have a natural curvature.

When we play piano we want a combination of control over the musculature and relaxation as well.

Here's a good test: do the Monkey Shrug. (Stretching and cracking of shoulders, arms, hands and fingers to relax them)

The fingers should be quite relaxed. We have weight.
Now just transfer that weight from one finger to the next.

We don't do this when we play, but we could have a thing where the fingers are just like a pivot point. (If you see great Indian musicians play tavalas, they tune up, and I think there's a similar motion that could be transposed to the keyboard.)

You want every finger to be able to play with a kind of uniformity.
Then of course you can put in the accents.

We cross our fingers over our thumbs.
And that's all there is.

When you do your scales you want to think of a few things.
One is playing slowly and really evenly, like a heartbeat.

Always play your scales thinking of a particular rhythm.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 (emphasis)

There are all sorts of games that we can play, we can go high end of the keyboard, low end of the keyboard, middle...slow, fast...we can be more chromatic or we can concentrate more on the black notes or the white notes.

The nice thing to do is to let your intuition or spontaneity come to the foreground, without having to think, just let things be. It's like an ongoing series of gestures.

In every person alive there is a unique personality and we also have a unique sound. For those of us that do love music, you will play differently in some way than anyone else. So there are probably as many sounds or styles as there are stars in the universe. With that in mind, we probably won't run out of ideas for quite some time.

When we're playing music we are constantly being pushed towards the assumption and belief that there's really only one good way to make music, and that is basically what our listening experience tells us.

If we are glued to AM radio and I play a little improvisation using a particular kind of language, as charming as it may be in the Herr Wonderful Arthur Schlonger Entertainer tradition, you may say it's just so much hot poop. And we're in trouble: I happen to like it. I dig Fever and All Through The Night.

So that's how it works. Let yourself be naive enough to suppose that there's more than one good way to make music.

Don't let the mind judge good or bad. Let the improvisations just be. It's very much a Zen-like experience. We're after an experience. We're not after "good" or "bad" or a "judgement".

There are many ways to make good music. Have some fun improvising at the keyboard.

The beautiful thing about music is that it has the power to touch you and put you in a state where you are very sensitive to wonderful feelings about life, and those feelings ultimately move towards love and all, which is truly meaningful to human beings.

In a nutshell that's really it. I can't really think of anything more beautiful or anything that contains more love than that. I think that's what music is. Music can express so, so many of our inventory of experiences.

Exercises: ostenado (repeated figure) with left hand (C-G)
with melody in C Major scale (any white notes)

C-G left hand/shift down and back
keeping repeated figure with right hand

*Triads are not the only thing that sounds good.