

Individual Presentation (SHR4C006R~001)

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Critical reflection of my practice

Scales - I find the scales in 3rds challenging, especially since I expected them to be Legato scales in 3rds (given my ABRSM background). I experimented with right-hand fingerings (while the left-hand follows octave-scale patterns) and incorporated them into my routine.

Articulation, legato and staccato, is crucial in scales and repertoire, varying by time period and stylistic characteristics.

Rehearsal techniques - dynamics, rhythms, pitches accuracy, tempo, form, articulation, performance markings, the piece's title (which sets the mood), and the composer's historical context and time period (Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th century, and Modern)

Performing a chosen composition - Creative freedom and accepting feedback from peers.

Reflective framework

Date and Time of Practise Session	<u>Experience</u> Aims and Objectives: What am I working on? What do I hope to achieve in this practise session?	<u>Reflection</u> To what extent did I achieve my aims? What are the reasons for the outcomes?	<u>Action</u> Plans for Future Practise: What do I need to do to progress in the next practise session?

Experience

- Scales in 3rds - Aim all eight selected keys (A Flat, F, B flat, F sharp, E, and B), Major & Minor, Legato and Staccato. - 10 -15 mins (including original scales in all 12 keys)
- Repertoire: Bach Prelude (1 hour for technical exam preparation) and piano duet ensemble pieces (15 minutes for individual/group practice).
- Sight-reading - use of the “Piano Magazines” (I like how they organise each piece by level: beginner, intermediate, advanced, exploring unknown modern composers, and pieces by well-known composers with miniature works) - 10 mins at end of practice session.

It is not only necessary that you should be able to play your pieces on the instrument, but you should also be able to hum the air without the piano. Strengthen your imagination so that you may not only retain the melody of a composition, but even the harmony which belongs to it - Fernández, J (2012) *Advice to Young Musicians, by Robert Schumann. 70 great Tips*. Available Online:

<https://www.violinist.com/blog/Chusman/201211/14170/> [Accessed 20/12/24]

Reflection and Action

Bach Prelude - I need to slow down on my practice and take more time, particularly in bars that lack security and fluidity. Using a metronome will help maintain the chosen tempo.

Scales & Arpeggios: Since the scales in 3rds are a new addition to my technique, the left-hand part remains the same as the similar motion scales. However, the fingering for the right-hand can be tricky, particularly in terms of using either the 1st or the 3rd finger to start. There is no easy way to do it apart from practising 'Scales in 3rds' alongside similar motion (major and minor melody and harmony), contrary motion, arpeggios (all 12 keys and in root, 1st and 2nd positions), dominant 7ths (selected keys) and chromatic.

Sight-reading - Playing different pieces by unknown composers and miniature works by well-known composers helped improve my skills and knowledge. Chords with ledger lines are challenging to read. I will continue sight-reading diverse composers and miniature works using "Piano Magazines".

Collaboration: Scheduling rehearsals with my partner is difficult, so we exchanged recorded parts for feedback.

Images

Scales in 3rd's - scales & finger positioning

Legato scales in 3rds:

Legato Scales in Thirds

G major (ABRSM fingering)

Edward Chan

The image shows a musical score for a piano exercise titled "Legato Scales in Thirds" in G major, using ABRSM fingering. The score is written for two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The piece consists of two main sections: an ascending scale and a descending scale, each divided into two parts. The first part of each section is marked with a fermata. The second part is marked with a fermata and a double bar line. The score includes detailed fingering numbers (1-5) for each note. The ascending scale starts on G4 and ends on G5, while the descending scale starts on G5 and ends on G4. The piece concludes with a final chord on G4.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIEjA2VonCI>

(couldn't find any images since this is Separate individual notes and NOT like chordal figures)

Analytical discussion

- Pitches of notes (A, C, G, etc.)
- Rhythms - Note durations (crotchets, Minims, Quavers, Semiquavers, Beamed quavers, Semibreves, Triplets dotted rhythms, rests, dotted note values). This exercise helps me feel and understand the pace of the compositional aspects of the piece of music that I am working on.
- Dynamics and articulation - expressive playing and control - Depends on the period. For example, Baroque often introduced features of sequential patterns that utilise pianos (soft) and fortes (loud): classical - pianissimos (Very soft) & fortissimos (very loud) are introduced. Gradual increase of crescendos (getting louder) & diminuendos (getting softer) is more apparent than in Baroque period (but not too dramatic). Romantic - use of Dramatic dynamics - Sforzandos, pianissississimo (very very soft), fortississimo (very very loud), expressive use of crescendos & diminuendos, use of rubato (robbed time used at end of phrases).
- Key and time signatures - The essential framework and layout of the piece indicates the pitches and how many beats there are per bar of the piece. Helps to maintain the time and overall feel of the piece (Keys: C, A flat, E flat, etc). Time signatures include 4/4, 2/4, 3/8 etc.
- Texture influences the listener's emotions and captivates the audience, determined by melodic, harmonic and rhythmic lines. Incorporating various movements and dynamics into the piece can be altered. Again, this can depend on the time period: Baroque - Polyphonic (Multiple melodies and countermelodies are played simultaneously, weaving in and out of each other), Contrapuntal (Different melodies are performed simultaneously, and they are independent of one another). Classical - Homophonic (Melody + Accompaniment). Romantic - Use of both Polyphonic & Homophonic textures but with dramatic effects.
- Form + Structure - the Blueprints of the piece - Binary (A B), Ternary (A B A), Rondo (A B A C A), Theme & Variations, Sonata, Strophic, Symphonies, Through-composed.
- Performance markings, title and composer establish the piece's mood. - Basic instructions on how to perform the piece, mainly in Latin, Italian, French and/or German - Andante (walking pace), Allegro (fast), Adagio (slow), Dolce (sweetly), Trieste (sad), Très (very), Langsam (slowly)

Analytical discussion

The three different pieces that I played during my Ensemble were Brahms Waltz opus 39 nos 9 and 11, Bartok's Six Romanian Folk Dances Sz.56 and Ravel's Petit Poucet (Ma mère l'oye). In these three pieces, they demand different technical playing abilities and are challenging, forcing me to work harder to develop my expression and sense of style.

Stylistics interpretation:

Brahms Waltz opus 39 nos 9 and 11 - sensitivity of dynamics in no 9 and a stark contrast for heavier sense of rhythms in no 11

Bartók's Six Romanian Folk Dances Sz.56 nos 2 and 3 - heavier chords and sense of importance in no 2. Softer, calmer, and sensitive response in No 3

Ravel's Petit Poucet (Ma mère l'oye)- smoother melodic lines, tons of serenity, sound painting, interpretation of animal sounds

Analytical discussion

Artistic interpretation

Brahms Waltz opus 39 nos 9 and 11 - flow, more calm, more profound depth of the typical standard waltz, dark and light aspects, more controlled voicing within the octaves, only a little bit of pedalling to sustain the bass notes, provides more dynamic and dramatic feel.

Bartók's Six Romanian Folk Dances Sz 56 nos 2 and 3 - lively aspects of a Sash Dance, derived initially from a spinning song-traditional Romanian melodies are woven into the piece, adding a lighter and more graceful touch to the lyrical and flowing sense of the dance. Softer, more introspective dance accompanied by stamping movements, a strong sense of rhythm, and careful attention to dynamics, in contrast to the drone-like bass line and haunting melody.

Ravel's Petit Poucet (Ma mère l'oye) - portrays a character called Tom Thumb who is wandering through the woods. Scales are required to add 'wandering' movements; shifting in time signatures adds more confusion to the character's choice of direction. Birdsong motifs signal birds eating the character's breadcrumbs. Melodic fragmentation creates disorientation, while modal-to-chromatic harmonic shifts enhance texture and exploration. This contrasts with the overt emotionality of Romantic pieces, focusing instead on sonic landscapes and subtle nuances.

Critically evaluating and appraising my practice (Scales)

Practising technical skills, such as finger dexterity, muscle memory, and strengthening technique by enhancing sight-reading skills (which might include scalar passages in some pieces), as well as hand coordination, knowledge of key signatures and chords is essential. Use of metronome to have a stronger sense of rhythm and timing of notes.

Improved: by learning new scales, such as legato scales in thirds, which helped me to develop stronger finger dexterity and hand coordination, as well as finger strength and stamina in the finger muscles. This improvement enables me to achieve smoother playing, particularly with the challenges of playing intervals.

Improvements needed: Learning scales in thirds in different keys, exploring other technical exercises with more studies (such as Bach and Czerny exercises), and incorporating more technical challenges to improve finger muscle strength (scales in 6ths, octaves, etc.)

Critically evaluating and appraising my practice - (Rehearsals)

Practicing rehearsal skills: articulation, Dynamics, Rhythms, pitches of notes, tempo, form and structure, historical context of the piece.

Improved on: working with different musicians helps me improve my skill set and develop new techniques through critical feedback. Motivation is key to maintaining the collaboration and musicality of shared knowledge.

Improvements needed: A stronger sense of communication would have helped me better, as I often lack it as a pianist. I need to step back a bit when collaborating with another musician and avoid feeling like a competition between musicians.

Critically evaluating and appraising my practice (Pieces)

Stylistic and artistic interpretation: understanding and conveying the composers' intentions behind the piece enables us, as musicians, to connect with the audience on an emotional and deeper level by using my interpretation of the piece. For example, when I play Brahms Waltz (opus 39 nos 9 + 11), I imagine and picture the scene where it's dark, you're in a ballroom with thousands of dancers in the centre of the room, candlelight atmosphere, and I'm trying to create that moment behind the composers intention of that vivid scene in my head, so I do that with my artistic licence approach to the music. Through research, I study biographies to gain insight into the composers' private lives and motivations.

I have improved on the following areas: when playing pieces, I have enhanced my sense of stylistic characteristics, knowledge of different periods, respect for other composers' intentions, understanding of the structure of intent, control of melody, harmony, and the structure of the pieces.

Improvements needed: Tonal control, better use of pedalling, conviction in more virtuosic repertoire to challenge and to increase my technical skills, expanding my musical understanding of more composers, and delivering an impressive performance to audiences. This will enable me to push the boundaries of technical ability.

Demanding precision, speed, and control will help me develop a more refined and advanced technique in my pieces.

Critically evaluating and appraising my practice

- As a classical pianist, progress is a key aspect of my profession. I am developing my overall abilities by using the proper methods of practice and continually keep pushing boundaries, even though I sometimes hold myself back.
- We sometimes strive to 'perfection' since the world of Classical Music is competitive and what that means for us as Classical Musicians is that we try to get to the highest 'level' of the professional musicians (Lang Lang, Yuja Wang, Daniil Trifonov, etc), to the point where we can be the next generation of Artists, Players, Composer etc.
- When I practice any piece that I'm doing for an exam or just an anonymous person gives me a piece to sight-read, I stop, think, and about the stylistic approach, flair and how the composition needs to articulated (in this case, the musical features and characteristics) with me so that I know how to tackle a piece. It can also depend on and vary with the difficulty of the piece (Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, or Expert), so I'd know if it's easy or too hard.
- When performing, I struggle to define my target audience. While young generations often prefer pop or viral music, I disregard stereotypes that classical music is 'boring' or exclusively for older listeners. We cannot change the arts, but it can be subjective at times.

Critically evaluation - Practice vs Performance

Practice and Performance modes

- Practice - As I mentioned in the last slide, I gave a summary on how to tackle any given piece. It is a personal preference for my practising methods, but it may also apply to some people without infringing on their individual preferences for their practice methods, of course. Practice mode is about having the right mindset to get into a piece. When I'm practising, for example, the Bach Prelude that I have to do for my technical exam, I look at the piece first and ask myself the questions, 'Is it in 2/4 time, 3/4 time? What's the key of the piece? Who's the composer? What's the time period? Etc. It's always good to ask yourself these questions as it can become easier to improve your techniques and rationalise your decisions on the piece itself.

'You must reach the stage where you are able to understand a piece of music, just from seeing it on paper' - Isserlis, S (2016) *Robert Schumann's Advice to Young Musicians*, London, Faber & Faber Ltd.

Critically evaluation - Practice vs Performance

- Performance - When I find the piece is comfortable enough (in terms of dexterity in finger muscles and not to overthink things), I ask myself: 'Ok, I've done all the hard work and now it's time to showcase what I've got to the audience.' I know, it may not sound all that glamorous at first, but we're musicians! We've got all the rights to perform! Performing matters cause it allows us to play our pieces with emotion, be experimental, and enjoy ourselves in the present moment. However, we must accept feedback- and sometimes criticism-to grow. During an " Performance in Context" class, I premiered my composition, "Galaxy Waltz", and even though it wasn't in the EXACT style of a typical Waltz, one of my Colleagues praised me for what I'd just played. He liked it, telling me that it was 'atmospheric' and it had inspired him to revisit a piece he had composed. It's beneficial to receive both positive and constructive feedback from your peers, allowing you to refine your approach for future endeavours.

'If your music comes from your heart and soul, and if you feel it inside yourself, it will affect others in the same way.' - Isserlis, S (2016) *Robert Schumann's Advice to Young Musicians*, London, Faber & Faber Ltd.

Appraising my practice

Though I rarely discuss this, I find it difficult to receive constructive feedback on my playing style. Though I strive to meet my goals, the sustained criticism I've faced has been demoralising.

'The only people that are making serious money today in classical music are world class musicians and conductors. The number of people trying to become excellent musicians is staggering, and the competition is always fierce. The general public simply isn't as interested in classical music as they once were, so the amount of people that will go to see a musician perform in a concert hall will almost always be much less than the number of people that will go to see a pop, jazz, or rock musician. Becoming successful in those genres is nearly just as difficult.' - Cornwall, J (2015) *Is going in Classical Music as a profession worth it?*

Available Online:

<https://www.quora.com/Is-going-into-classical-music-as-a-profession-worth-it#:~:text=Should%20I%20major%20in%20Classical,pragmatic%20person%20than%20I%20was.&text=Is%20it%20hard%20to%20develop,careers%20for%20music%20composition%20majors> [Accessed 26/12/24]

Implementing techniques learnt and putting it into artistic and stylistic context

Bach Prelude - sequential patterns per 2 bars, mordents (upper note), dynamics: Pianos and fortes (might have to use little crescendos and diminuendos for rising and falling figures), Mini coda before ending, play it in time.

Venetian Gondola Song - Mendelssohn & Mignon - Schumann: both miniature pieces are well-known; expressive playing is required. RH solo passage can capture sorrow and melancholy (perhaps try to evoke Robert's emotions of when he lost his wife, Clara). Mendelssohn piece is also well-known; It needs to flow more freely. (early not late Romantic, style differs)

Ensemble pieces: Schumann, Szymanowski, Rachmaninoff, and Beethoven - 'The Poet Speaks' solo cadence passage feels more expressive (since I have the Primo part), rests are needed emphasis, 'Prelude' needs more time for syncopation at beginning, Rachmaninoff piece is better, need to slow down on some bars, Beethoven arrangement (still not heard from Piano partner yet)

Evidence of Reflective Practice examples

- Bach Prelude:

Præludium 17. Praeludium und Fuge As-Dur BWV 162

20

24

28

32

36

40

Ensemble Pieces: Schumann - The Poet Speaks

40. 13.
LE POÈTE
PARLE.
DER DICHTER
SPRICHT.

Moderato, (♩ = 112)

pp *p* *rit.*

rit. *pp* *ritard* *p*

ritard *pp* *ritar-* - - - *dan* - - - *do*

Ensemble Pieces: Rachmaninoff - Romance in G major

The image displays four pages of handwritten musical notation for Rachmaninoff's Romance in G major, arranged in two pairs of spiral-bound notebooks. The notation is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of [Moderato].

The first page (left notebook, page 82) features the title "Романс" (Romance) and the subtitle "для фортепиано в 4 руки" (for piano in 4 hands). It includes the tempo marking "[Moderato]" and the number "[104 + 7]". The notation is in G major and 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a tempo marking of [Moderato]. The piece is in G major and 4/4 time. The notation is in G major and 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a tempo marking of [Moderato].

The second page (right notebook, page 83) continues the notation. It includes the tempo marking "[Moderato]" and the number "[104 + 7]". The notation is in G major and 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a tempo marking of [Moderato].

The third page (left notebook, page 84) continues the notation. It includes the tempo marking "[Moderato]" and the number "[104 + 7]". The notation is in G major and 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a tempo marking of [Moderato].

The fourth page (right notebook, page 85) continues the notation. It includes the tempo marking "[Moderato]" and the number "[104 + 7]". The notation is in G major and 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a tempo marking of [Moderato].

Ensemble Pieces: Beethoven - 'Moonlight' Sonata

Sonata Op. 27 No. 2
Mvt. 1
L. V. Beethoven Op. 27 No. 2

Allegro sostenuto

The image displays a spiral-bound music book open to two pages of musical notation for Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata, Op. 27 No. 2, Movement 1. The left page is the title page, featuring the title, movement number, and composer's name. The score is written for piano and consists of three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The right page continues the musical notation with similar staves and clefs. The paper is aged and slightly yellowed, and the spiral binding is visible on the left side of the book.

Ensemble Pieces: Beethoven - 'Moonlight' Sonata (cont)

The image shows a page of musical notation for the 'Moonlight' Sonata by Beethoven, specifically the continuation of the first movement. The page is divided into three systems of staves, each with a treble and bass clef. The music is in D minor and 3/3 time. The first system includes a 'cresc.' marking. The second system includes a 'pp' marking. The third system includes a 'decresc.' marking. The page ends with a double bar line and a 'pp' marking.

Practice journal/manifesto of approach to playing

I keep a weekly journal of my progress by writing down my Achievements of the Week.

Documenting my practice duration, focus areas, and progress helps me track improvement.

I also experience mild physical discomfort, which limits my practice time. Therefore, I note the symptoms and how I counter them in my reports.

I keep my journals; reviewing past entries occasionally is beneficial.

As a working classical musician, keeping a practice journal helps me stay motivated in my practice even more. It keeps me on top of the tasks I'm working on, so I don't fall into the 'danger zone' of bad practising.

Critical appraisal of own practice

‘This is part of the dilemma for twenty-first century musicians. Technological progress, the permeation of and fast access to music everywhere, and the ever fickle desires and mores of societies leave many classical musicians at a loss and demands creativity.’ - Ondracek-Peterson, E (n.d.) *What Does it mean to be a Musician in the 21st Century?* Available Online:

<https://emilyop.com/meaning-of-musician-in-21st-century/#:~:text=A%20musician%20in%20the%20twenty%2Dfirst%20century%20means:,Creating%20your%20own%20career%20path> [Accessed 27/12/24]

Whilst on the subject of ‘Critical appraise’, I find it difficult to assess myself in terms of development and progress, as I have a background of working with private tutors and an educational structure. However, during my time at university, with an academic framework based on personal development and independent learning, it is taking me some time to assess my personal growth. However, these sessions have helped me to analyse my development on a more critical level and highlight areas for improvement. And more importantly, the tools and methods to do so. For example, video or audio diaries.

Masterclass quotes

‘And do you agree with me, that the first condition of an artist should be to bear respect towards what is great, and to bow to it and acknowledge it, and not attempt to extinguish great flames for the sake of making his own rushlight burn more brightly?’ - Felix Mendelssohn

‘The trouble with music appreciation in general is that people are taught to have too much respect for music; they should be taught to love it instead’. - Igor Stravinsky

If my works are good and of any importance for the further development of our art, they will maintain their position in spite of all opposition on the part of critics, and in spite of all denigration of my artistic intentions. If they are worthless, not even the most gratifying box office success or the most enthusiastic acclamation of augurs will keep them alive. Let the pulping press devour them...I shall not shed a tear over their grave. - Richard Strauss

‘Simplicity is the final achievement. After one has played a vast quantity of notes, it is simplicity that emerges as the crowning reward of art’ - Chopin.

Let no one imagine that in owning a recording he has the **music**. The very **practice of music** is a celebration that we own nothing. – John Cage

I would like to acknowledge the Masterclass session at Leeds Conservatoire, as the guest lecturers were very informative and I gained some very valuable knowledge.

Comparative recordings of established musicians

Bach -Prelude in A falt Major: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GH-kkZQQ8G8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCVVAXHRTs0>

Mendelssohn - Venetian Gondola song : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88auDaWXdQY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUj1XjKiR94>

Schumann - Mignon: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ey8DsD--Ys>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDJHbyEdJbl>

Schumann - The Poet Speakas: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KG5ocU9IT-w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UroWVTDb8Oo>

Szymanowski - Prelude: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AqXrydTmHg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvJNPFiUWhY>

Rachmaninoff Romance in G major: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVRN4NCUZJM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H3RozF8aRE>

Articles, academic literature and reviews

Tomes, S (2002) *Practice make Imperfect* Available Online:

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2002/dec/28/classicalmusicandopera.artsfeatures> [Accessed 28/12/24]

Wilson, F (2020) *How to Practice* Available Online: <https://interlude.hk/how-to-practice/> [Accessed 28/12/24]

Stockinger, J (2013) *Classical Music: How do Concert Pianists practice? Stephen Hough offers tips.* Available Online:

<https://welltempered.wordpress.com/2013/10/19/classical-music-how-do-concert-pianists-practice-stephen-hough-offers-tips/> [Accessed 28/12/24]

Elizabeth-Bennett, D (2005) *Classical Instrumental Musicians: Educating for Sustainable Professional Practice.* Available Online:

https://api.research-repository.uwa.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/33544367/Bennett_Dawn_Elizabeth_2005.pdf [Accessed 28/12/24]

Zhukov, K (2009) *Effective Practicing: A Research Prespective.* Available Online:

<https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/informit.040490428158089> [Accessed 28/12/24]

Kageyama, N (2009) *How Many Hours a Day Should You Practice?* Available Online:

<https://bulletproofmusician.com/how-many-hours-a-day-should-you-practice/> [Accessed 28/12/24]

Articles, academic literature and reviews

Practicing for Artistic Success: The Musician's Guide to Self-Empowerment" by Burton Kaplan

Kaplan, B. (2004) *Practicing for Artistic Success: The Musician's Guide to Self-Empowerment* NY: Perception Development Techniques.

O'Hagan, P. (2016) *Pierre Boulez and the Piano: A study in Style and Technique* UK: Routledge.

Ravel - Petit Poucet - Clara's Piano Corner (2025) *ii. Petit Poucet, from Ravel's Ma mère L'Oye Mother Goose* [Video]
Available Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hroHGGyD0AQ> [Accessed 31/7/25]