

Aug 12, 2013

Peggy,

Thanks for the books. I had already been working on a few things before I received them. For example, I've worked on Golden Slippers, Oh Suzanna, Simple Gifts, etc.

I'm just learning, of course, and sometimes I play things better than at other times. Also, I'm still trying to master smooth hammering.

At any rate, I was working on The Rights of Man in your Hammer Hands book. I've played it a bunch. Sometimes are better than others. I can't seem to play it perfectly, though.

Here is my question. I seem to be getting "bogged down" trying to be perfect with the stuff I play. Should I just stick with songs until they are perfect, or should I move on to other things after awhile and revisit the less than perfect from time to time?

Any thought you have would be appreciated. Thanks!

Madeline

Aug 13, 2013

Hi Madeline, Glad to hear from you. The question you ask is actually, "How do I manage my playing time.?" It has been said that "Practice makes perfect" but that is actually not precisely true. It should be, "Perfect practice makes perfect playing." The bottom line is that you have to play the piece correctly ... otherwise you're just practicing your mistakes.

Perfect practice means isolating the trouble spots and figuring out a hammer pattern that will work smoothly. Go through that small spot slowly, and gradually increase your speed. Then start from the beginning and the trouble spot should be ironed out. Take every trouble spot and iron it out in the same way. I suggest that you write your hammering onto the music so that you're sure to do it the same way every time. I've made hammering suggestions on some of the pieces, but not all. On the other hand, my suggestions are not set in stone and you might find another hammering sequence that works better for you in each instance. (The secret is to LEARN your string-board.... and that only comes with lots of practice.)

I always recommend starting each practice session with a few pieces you've learned and can play smoothly, and that you enjoy playing. This helps to build your confidence. Going over and over the things you've already learned is really good practice. It reinforces the good habits you've worked on, and it helps you become more creative in adding embellishments as you learn them.

Next, go thru some of the tunes that are less perfect, without trying to iron out the rough spots... just enjoy the parts that are working smoothly and don't worry about the mistakes (yet). Then go on to some new tunes and try them out to see if you like them, but don't worry about getting them perfect. This helps develop your sight-reading skills, and helps you explore your sound board. This is likely to be somewhat taxing, but don't get bogged down, then go on to the next step.

Next, go ahead and tackle a challenging tune. Work on it as I explained above, then quit for awhile and give your brain a chance to process what you've learned. As you relax, your subconscious brain will still be processing the new input. Do something mindless... mow the yard, straighten up your desk, organize your sock drawer, etc.

When you go back to practice later, try the challenging piece first, then go back to step one and keep on hammering!

Let me know how you're progressing. I think there are some articles on how to practice on my web page. They were there for awhile, but I may have taken them down. I'll look and see what's there.

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