

belongs to natural philosophy. For even if I could not avoid mixing up esthetic problems with physical, the former were comparatively simple, and the latter much more complicated. This relation would necessarily become inverted if I attempted to proceed further into the esthetics of music, and to enter on the theory of rhythm, forms of composition, and means of musical expression. In all these fields the properties of sensual perception would of course have an influence at times, but only in a very subordinate degree. The real difficulty would lie in the development of the psychical motives which here assert themselves. Certainly this is the point where the more interesting part of musical esthetics begins, the aim being to explain the wonders of great works of art, and to learn the utterances and actions of the various affections of the mind. But, however alluring such an aim may be, I prefer leaving others to carry out such investigations, in which I should feel myself too much of an amateur, while I myself remain on the safe ground of natural philosophy, in which I am at home.

166 Amy Fay

Amy Fay was a celebrated American concert pianist as well as a lecturer and teacher. She lived for a time in each of three major musical centers, Boston, Chicago, and New York, and became active in organizations to promote women's participation, such as the Amateur Music Club and the New York Women's Philharmonic Society (which she also served as president).

Fay was born in Louisiana in 1844. At the age of twenty-five she traveled to Germany to continue her musical studies and remained there for six years. Her vivid and perceptive letters home, describing her studies and other musical adventures, were edited for publication by her sister, Melusina Fay Peirce (feminist writer on the reform of domestic architecture and first wife of the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce). The resulting little book enjoyed great popularity, appearing in twenty-five editions in the United States alone, in several English editions, and in French and German translations.

Women were admitted into European conservatories as performance students in large numbers during the nineteenth century, but many restrictions were placed upon them: instruction was usually segregated by gender, as Amy Fay describes here; the curriculum for women was often a truncated version of that offered to men; and it was not until late in the century that women were admitted as composition students, or that their professional aspirations were taken seriously. Boston composer Mabel Daniels also wrote a memoir, *An American Girl in Munich*, describing her conservatory study a few decades later than Fay's.

FROM *Music-Study in Germany* (1880)

Berlin, February 8, 1870

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The day after Tausig's concert I went, as usual, to hear him give the lesson to his best class of girls. I got there a little before the hour, and the girls were in the dressing-room waiting for the young men to be through with their lesson. They were talking about the concert. "Was it not beautiful?" said little Timanoff, to me; "I did not sleep the whole night after it!"—a touch of sentiment that quite surprised me in that small personage, and made me feel some compunctions, as I had slept soundly myself. "I have practiced five hours to-day already," she added. Just then the young men came out of the class-room and we passed into it. Tausig was standing by the piano. "Begin!" said he, to Timanoff, more shortly even than usual; "I trust you have brought me a study *this* time." He always insists upon a study in addition to the piece. Timanoff replied in the affirmative, and proceeded to open Chopin's *Etudes*. She played the great A minor "Winter Wind" study, and most magnificently, too, starting off with the greatest brilliancy and "go." I was perfectly amazed at such a feat from such a child, and expected that Tausig would exclaim with admiration. Not so that Rhadamanthus. He heard it through without comment or correction, and when Timanoff had finished, simply remarked very composedly, "So! Have you taken the *next* Etude, also?" as if the great A minor were not enough for one meal! It is eight pages long to begin with, and there is no let up to the difficulty all the way through. Afterward, however, he told the young men that he "could not have done it better" himself.

Tausig is so hasty and impatient that to be in his classes must be a fearful ordeal. He will not bear the slightest fault. The last time I went into his class to hear him teach he was dreadful. Fräulein H. began, and she has remarkable talent, and is far beyond me. She would not play *piano* enough to suit him, and finally he stamped his foot at her, snatched her hand from the piano, and said: "Will you play *piano* or not, for if not we will go no farther?" The second girl sat down and played a few lines. He made her begin over again several times, and finally came up and took her music away and slapped it down on the piano,—"You have been studying this for weeks and you can't play a note of it; practice it for a month and then you can bring it to me again," he said.

The third was Fräulein Timanoff, who is a little genius, I think. She brought a Sonata by Schubert—the one, I believe, in A—and by the way he behaved Tausig must have a particular feeling about that particular Sonata. Timanoff

TEXT: *Music-Study in Germany*, from the *Home Correspondence of Amy Fay* (Chicago, 1880), pp. 39–42, 163–68, 210–14.

began running it off in her usual nimble style, having practiced it evidently every minute of the time when she was not asleep, since the last lesson. She had not proceeded far down the first page when he stopped her, and began to fuss over the expression. She began again, but this time with no better luck. A third time, but still he was dissatisfied, though he suffered her to go on a little farther. He kept stopping her every moment in the most tantalizing and exasperating manner. If it had been I, I should have cried, but Timanoff was well broken, and only flushed deeply to the very tips of her small ears. From an apple blossom she changed to a carnation. Tausig grew more and more savage, and made her skip whole pages in his impatience. "Play here!" he would say, in the most imperative tone, pointing to a half or whole page farther on. "This I cannot hear!—Go on farther!—It is too bad to be listened to!" Finally, he struck the music with the back of his hand, and exclaimed, in a despairing way, "*Kind, es liegt eine Seele darin. Weisst du nicht es liegt eine Seele darin?*" (Child, there's a soul in the piece. Don't you know there is a *soul* in it?) To the little Timanoff, who has no soul, and who is not sufficiently experienced to counterfeit one, this speech evidently conveyed no particular idea. She ran on as glibly as ever till Tausig could endure no more, and shut up the music. I was much disappointed, as it was new to me, and I like to hear Timanoff's little fingers tinkle over the keys, "seele" or no "seele." She has a most accurate and dainty way of doing everything, and somehow, in her healthy little brain I hardly wish for *Seele!*

Last of all Fräulein L. played, and she alone suited Tausig. She is a Swede, and is the best scholar he has, but she has such frightfully ugly hands, and holds them so terribly, that when I look at her I cannot enjoy her playing. Tausig always praises her very much, and she is tremendously ambitious.

Tausig has a charming face, full of expression and very sensitive. He is extremely sharp-sighted, and has eyes in the back of his head, I believe. He is far too small and too despotic to be fascinating, however, though he has a sort of captivating way with him when he is in a good humor.

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Berlin, February 10, 1872

A week ago last Monday I went to Dresden with J. L. to visit B. H. . . . B. did everything in her power to amuse us, and she is the soul of amiability. She kept inviting people to meet us, and had several tea-parties, and when we had no company she took us to the theatre or the opera. She invited Marie Wieck (the sister of Clara Schumann) to tea one night. I was very glad to meet her, for she is an exquisite artist herself, and plays in Clara Schumann's style, though her conception is not so remarkable. Her touch is perfect. At B.'s request she tried to play for us, but the action of B.'s piano did not suit her, and she presently got up, saying that she could do nothing on that instrument, but that if we would come to *her*, she would play for us with pleasure.

I was in high glee at that proposal, for I was very anxious to see the famous

Wieck, the trainer of so many generations of musicians. Fräulein Wieck appointed Saturday evening, and we accordingly went. B. had instructed us how to act, for the old man is quite a character, and has to be dealt with after his own fashion. She said we must walk in (having first laid off our things) as if we had been members of the family all our lives, and say, "Good-evening, Papa Wieck,"—(everybody calls him Papa). Then we were to seat ourselves, and if we had some knitting or sewing with us it would be well. At any rate we must have the apparent intention of spending several hours, for nothing provokes him so as to have people come in simply to call. "What!" he will say, "do you expect to know a celebrated man like me in half an hour?" then (very sarcastically), "perhaps you want my autograph!" He hates to give his autograph.

Well, we went through the prescribed programme. We were ushered into a large room, much longer than it was broad. At either end stood a grand piano. Otherwise the room was furnished with the greatest simplicity. My impression is that the floor was a plain yellow painted one, with a rug or two here and there. A few portraits and bas-reliefs hung upon the walls. The pianos were of course fine. Frau Wieck and "Papa" received us graciously. We began by taking tea, but soon the old man became impatient, and said, "Come! the ladies wish to perform (*vortragen*) something before me, and if we don't begin we shan't accomplish anything." He *lives* entirely in music, and has a class of girls whom he instructs every evening for nothing. Five of these young girls were there. He is very deaf, but strange to say, he is as sensitive as ever to every musical sound, and the same is the case with Clara Schumann. Fräulein Wieck then opened the ball. She is about forty, I should think, and a stout, phlegmatic-looking woman. However, she played superbly, and her touch is one of the most delicious possible. After hearing her, one is not surprised that the Wiecks think nobody can teach touch but themselves. She began with a nocturne by Chopin, in F major. I forgot to say that the old Herr sits in his chair with the air of being on a throne, and announces beforehand each piece that is to be played, following it with some comment: *e.g.*, "This nocturne I allowed my daughter Clara to play in Berlin forty years ago, and afterward the principal newspaper in criticising her performance, remarked: 'This young girl seems to have much talent; it is only a pity that she is in the hands of a father whose head seems stuck full of queer new-fangled notions,'—so new was Chopin to the public at that time." That is the way he goes on.

After Fräulein Wieck had finished the nocturne, I asked for something by Bach, which I'm told she plays remarkably. She said that at the moment she had nothing in practice by Bach, but she would play me a *gigue* by a composer of Bach's time,—Haesler, I think she said, but cannot remember, as it was a name entirely unknown to me. It was very brilliant, and she executed it beautifully. Afterward she played the last movement of Beethoven's Sonata in E flat major, but I wasn't particularly struck with her conception of that. Then we had a pause, and she urged me to play. I refused, for as I had been in Dresden a week and had not practiced, I did not wish to sit down and not do myself

justice. My hand is so stiff, that as Tausig said of himself (though of him I can hardly believe it), "When I haven't practiced for fourteen days I can't do anything." The old Herr then said, "Now we'll have something else;" and got up and went to the piano, and called the young girls. He made three of them sing, one after the other, and they sang very charmingly indeed. One of them he made improvise a *cadenza*, and a second sang the alto to it without accompaniment. He was very proud of that. He exercises his pupils in all sorts of ways, trains them to sing any given tone, and "to skip up and down the ladder," as they call the scale.

After the master had finished with the singing, Fräulein Wieck played three more pieces, one of which was an exquisite arrangement by Liszt of that song by Schumann, "*Du meine Seele*." She ended with a *gavotte* by Gluck, or as Papa Wieck would say, "This is a *gavotte* from one of Gluck's operas, arranged by Brahms for the piano. To the superficial observer the second movement will appear very easy, but in *my* opinion it is a very hard task to hit it exactly." I happened to know just how the thing ought to be played, for I had heard it three times from Clara Schumann herself. Fräulein Wieck didn't please me at all in it, for she took the second movement twice as quickly as the first. "Your sister plays the second movement much slower," said I. "So?" said she, "I've never heard it from her." She then asked, "So slow?" playing it slower. "Still slower?" said she, beginning a third time, at my continual disapproval. "*Streng im Tempo* (in strict time)," said I, nodding my head oracularly. "*Väterchen*." called she to the old Herr, "Miss Fay says that Clara plays the second movement so slow," showing him. I don't know whether this correction made an impression, but he was then *determined* that I should play, and on my continued refusal he finally said that he found it very strange that a young lady who had studied more than two years in Tausig's and Kullak's conservatories shouldn't have *one* piece that she could play before people. This little fling provoked me, so up I jumped, and saying to myself, "*Kopf in die Höhe, Brust heraus—vorwärts!*" (one of the military orders here), I marched to the piano and played the fugue at the end of Beethoven's A flat Sonata, Op. 110. They all sat round the room as still as so many statues while I played, and you cannot imagine how dreadfully nervous I was. I thought fifty times I would have to stop, for, like all fugues, it is such a piece that if you once get out you never can get in again, and Bülow himself got mixed up on the last part of it the other night in his concert. But I got well through, notwithstanding, and the old master was good enough to commend me warmly. He told me I must have studied a great deal, and asked me if I hadn't played a great many *Etuden*. I informed him in polite German "He'd better believe I had!"

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Weimar, May 21, 1873

Liszt is so *besieged* by people and so tormented with applications, that I fear I should only have been sent away if I had come without the Baroness von S.'s

letter of introduction, for he admires her extremely, and I judge that she has much influence with him. He says "people fly in his face by dozens," and seem to think he is "only there to give lessons." He gives *no* paid lessons whatever, as he is much too grand for that, but if one has talent enough, or pleases him, he lets one come to him and play to him. I go to him every other day, but I don't play more than twice a week, as I cannot prepare so much, but I listen to the others. Up to this point there have been only four in the class besides myself, and I am the only new one. From four to six P. M. is the time when he receives his scholars. The first time I went I did not play to him, but listened to the rest. Urspruch and Leitert, the two young men who I met the other night, have studied with Liszt a long time, and both play superbly. Fräulein Schultz and Miss Gaul (of Baltimore), are also most gifted creatures.

As I entered Liszt's salon, Urspruch was performing Schumann's Symphonic Studies—an immense composition, and one that it took at least half an hour to get through. He played so splendidly that my heart sank down into the very depths. I thought I should never get on *there!* Liszt came forward and greeted me in a very friendly manner as I entered. He was in very good humour that day, and made some little witticisms. Urspruch asked him what title he should give to a piece he was composing. "*Per aspera ad astra*," said Liszt. This was such a good hit that I began to laugh, and he seemed to enjoy my appreciation of his little sarcasm. I did not play that time, as my piano had only just come, and I was not prepared to do so, but I went home and practiced tremendously for several days on Chopin's B minor sonata. It is a great composition, and one of his last works. When I thought I could play it, I went to Liszt, though with a trembling heart. I cannot tell you what it has cost me every time I have ascended his stairs. I can scarcely summon up courage to go there, and generally stand on the steps awhile before I can make up my mind to open the door and go in!

This day it was particularly trying, as it was really my first serious performance before him, and he speaks so very indistinctly that I feared I shouldn't understand his corrections, and that he would get out of patience with me, for he cannot bear to explain. I think he hates the trouble of speaking German, for he mutters his words and does not half finish his sentences. Yesterday when I was there he spoke to me in French all the time, and to the others in German,—one of his funny whims, I suppose.

Well, on this day the artists Leitert and Urspruch, and the young composer Metzdorf, who is always hanging about Liszt, were in the room when I came. They had probably been playing. At first Liszt took no notice of me beyond a greeting, till Metzdorf said to him, "Herr Doctor, Miss Fay has brought a sonata." "Ah, well, let us hear it," said Liszt. Just then he left the room for a minute, and I told the three gentlemen that they ought to go away and let me play to Liszt alone, for I felt nervous about playing before them. They all laughed at me and said they would not budge an inch. When Liszt came back they said to him, "Only think, Herr Doctor, Miss Fay proposes to send us all

home." I said I could not play before such great artists. "Oh, that is healthy for you," said Liszt, with a smile, and added, "you have a very choice audience, now." I don't know whether he appreciated how nervous I was, but instead of walking up and down the room as he often does, he sat down by me like any other teacher, and heard me play the first movement. It was frightfully hard, but I had studied it so much that I managed to get through with it pretty successfully. Nothing could exceed Liszt's amiability, or the trouble he gave himself, and instead of frightening me, he inspired me. Never was there such a delightful teacher! and he is the first sympathetic one I've had. You feel so *free* with him, and he develops the very spirit of music in you. He doesn't keep nagging at you all the time, but he leaves you your own conception. Now and then he will make a criticism, or play a passage, and with a few words give you enough to think of all the rest of your life. There is a delicate *point* to everything he says, as subtle as he is himself. He doesn't tell you anything about the technique. That you must work out for yourself. When I had finished the first movement of the sonata, Liszt said "Bravo!" Taking my seat, he made some little criticisms, and then told me to go on and play the rest of it.

Now, I only half knew the other movements, for the first one was so extremely difficult that it cost me all the labour I could give to prepare that. But playing to Liszt reminds me of trying to feed the elephant in the Zoological Garden with lumps of sugar. He disposes of whole movements as if they were nothing, and stretches out gravely for more! One of my fingers fortunately began to bleed, for I had practiced the skin off, and that gave me a good excuse for stopping. Whether he was pleased at this proof of industry, I know not; but after looking at my finger and saying, "Oh!" very compassionately, he sat down and played the whole three last movements himself. That was a great deal, and showed off all his powers. It was the first time I had heard him, and I don't know which was the most extraordinary,—the Scherzo, with its wonderful lightness and swiftness, the Adagio with its depth and pathos, or the last movement, where the whole keyboard seemed to "*donnern und blitzen* (thunder and lighten)." There is such a vividness about everything he plays that it does not seem as if it were mere music you were listening to, but it is as if he had called up a real, living *form*, and you saw it breathing before your face and eyes. It gives *me* almost a ghostly feeling to hear him, and it seems as if the air were peopled with spirits. Oh, he is a perfect wizard! It is as interesting to see him as it is to hear him, for his face changes with every modulation of the piece, and he looks exactly as he is playing. He has one element that is most captivating, and that is, a sort of delicate and fitful mirth that keeps peering out at you here and there! It is most peculiar, and when he plays that way, the most bewitching little expression comes over his face. It seems as if a little spirit of joy were playing hide and go seek with you.

MUSICAL ENCOUNTERS