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# Collaborative Piano

## *challenges and key features*

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# Abstract

After having decided to continue my musical career as a piano collaborator, I opted to examine the area of study more specifically. This study aims to identify the fundamental competencies for professional collaborators. I intend to highlight some of the challenges, key features, and difficulties that I may face during the process, as well as investigate how a revised view of being a collaborative pianist could impact my own music making process which might be more comprehensive in the long term.

# Key Words

Piano, collaborative, accompanist, singers, performance

# Content

## Key Words

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# Introduction

## Historical background

The term "collaborative piano" is a specific discipline and one of the most important branches in Performing Art, that combines specific set of the skills, like artistic leadership and initiator with a singer, instrumentalist, or conductor, as well as the ability of sight-read, transpose, being familiar with a wide range of repertoire along with sensitive ear for ensemble etc.

The first recorded use of the word accompanist as a term to describe a pianist who works with or collaborates alongside another instrumentalist or singer can be found in Johann Caspar Heck's A Complete System of Harmony, published in 1768, although the first use of the related word accompaniment as a term used to describe a musical part that supports or partners an instrument, voice, or group occurred in 1697 (Fincher, 2020, p.14) In 1969 the Music Journal published an article by Earl F. and Carolyn M. Rankin entitled "The Role of the Accompanist." Which shows how early it started considering that the requirements from the collaborative pianists had to be absolutely different compared to soloists.

The 1979 Journal in the USA underlined the contrasts between the two disciplines, but only in our days collaborative pianist is accepted as a separate discipline.

Accompanists need to be trained as accompanists in schools of music. No longer can we assume that the skills of the piano soloist and the skills of the accompanist are synonymous, they are not. Nor can we "palm off" the accompanist's job to second-rate pianists. (Rose, 1981, p.11)

The term accompanist has become less prevalent, instead, the term collaborative pianist is more commonly used especially in the United States. In recent years, terminology has shifted because to the opinion that the word accompanying often represents an association of lesser than, or background, and the necessity of this term arises from the underappreciated piano part during the partnership.

In the twentieth century, famous collaboration pianists began to explore this issue through their work. Gerald Moore even authored the book "The Unashamed Accompanist" to detail all of the difficulties and limitations that a collaborator may face, as well as Martin Katz who wrote "The Complete Collaborator: The Pianist as Partner" and many others who have carried out a few investigations in this field, but still, we do not have a lot of theoretical material available for future collaboratives.

Pei-Shan Lee provides an example of the first use of the term “collaborative pianist” and its importance in music:

The notion that a keyboardist might serve a genuinely collaborative function—rather than one that exclusively “accompanies,” or follows, the soloist—began to be discussed on a wider scale in the 1970’s, and continues to receive increasing attention. This branch of the pianistic art concerns collaboration among equal artistic visions. In order to encourage a more accurate understanding of this role, Samuel Sanders coined the term “collaborative pianist.” Some have adopted this label into their vocabulary, but on a widespread scale, it is used interchangeably with the term “accompanist.” (Lee, 2009, p.4)

## Personal background

There are several reasons why I decided to write my reflective part on this subject. The first and most important one is that, after many years of being a solo pianist, I decided to continue my musical career as a collaborator. I always had an active life as a collaborative pianist during my solo studies and that is when I first experienced the “love of partnership” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FS2evuqqUYM>)

Having a solo career as a pianist means dedicating practically all of one's day in an isolated rehearsal room, which, for someone like me, who enjoys socialising, always requires too much endurance. It was always an issue for me, but as Gerald Moore says the Glory that solo career has, (Moore,1956, p.5) always catches you more than career as a collaborator, and moreover when it is underrated.

For me, the music-making process is something I can never turn down, and for many years I wondered, "Why not be a collaborative pianist and make the music with someone all the time?! Why not share ideas and make studying even more enjoyable?! So, I determined that the rare honour that I receive as a soloist is not worth sacrificing a life of being practically alone. Furthermore, you can always be a soloist at the same time, but with fewer performances.

Of course, before eventually entering into the collaborative world, I needed to fully understand and evaluate it, therefore I decided that my master's research would support me with the best knowledge right before moving. Another motivating factor and aim which drives my interest in this sector is my desire to contribute to the development of the

Collaborative Piano Degree Program, which will soon take place at Tbilisi State Conservatoire. The first obstacle while researching this area was the lack of information and contributions. Therefore, I also intend to broaden concerns of collaborative Piano Degree Programs and Accompanying Systems, meaning that the project will also be relevant for those who are considering moving into the collaborative world, as well as those who are not, but wish to get theoretical understanding about the subject.

It is important to mention that, I will be taking an audition for the repetiteur and coach program at Malmo Opera in a few months, therefore, my aim is to put all of the resources and theoretical studies into practice as much as possible for an upcoming audition, which will be reflected in the results of this research later on.

## Aim

The aim for this thesis is to find out: what are the challenges and key features of being a collaborative pianist?

## Theory

In this chapter I will present a few of the world's leading collaborative pianists and their insights and thoughts on the subject. When googling the term, three out of eight notable artists mentioned in wikipedia are women<sup>1</sup>. It has been an interesting process reading and learning about the female role models in the field.<sup>2</sup> I will present two of them below.

## Gerald Moore

Fair enough to start with one of the most famous piano collaborators Gerald Moore who became a prominent piano accompanist to the finest singers of his age, from Kathleen Ferrier to Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, was born in Watford, England. His accomplishments also included lecturing about his Art and several remarkable books.

Moore's "The Unashamed Accompanist" (1956) deals with all the important aspects that might help pianists to become collaborative artists.

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Moore, Malcolm Martineau, Margo Garrett, Jean Barr, Martin Katz, Warren Jones, Roger Vignoles, ] Lina Coen,

<sup>2</sup> A special thanks to Matti Hirvonen and Magnus Svensson for providing information on female collaborative pianists,

The unashamed accompanist was written in the fond hope that it might indicate the lines along which a would-be follower of the gentle art of accompaniment should work; It was written to arouse more interest in and to show the importance of the accompaniment, in order to appreciation and enjoyment of good music maybe enlarged and enriched to those who are not aware of its significance.” (Moore, 1956, p.3)

As he points out, the art of accompanying needs to be more highlighted and described. The main material in his book that catches my interest is about partnership, practising, rehearsing, bad habits, sight reading and preparation.

Moore discusses partnership in the opening chapter of his book, addressing the presumptions that were common at the time (1943), and which I think still exists nowadays. He was one of the first to start talking about how underrated a pianist is as a collaborator and his concern was based also on the fact that pianists that time were getting lower compensation than the soloist while no good composer writes an accompaniment afterthought.

The partnership between singer and pianist is a fifty-fifty affair as surely as it is between violinist and pianist in, let's say, the Kreutzer sonata of Beethoven. That the fiddler may receive a bigger fee than the piano accompanist (as distinct from the piano virtuoso) that the singer's name may loom larger than this, that it is the big name which draws at the box office, have nothing to do with it. We must have souls above such mundane and sordid things. (Moore, 1956, p.2)

Moore expresses a warm and genuine emotional connection to his work, illustrated by a quote from an interview “love of partnership is the thing that obsessed me during all my professional life (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FS2evuqqUYM>).

He raises the question multiple times, why do not so many piano students devote themselves to accompanying and he answers it saying that probably it is because there is more glory in the career of solo pianist, while the variety in the style of playing and the mental approach that accompanist needs is inexhaustible (Moore, 1956. p.5).

Moore believes that pianists can solve the problem of being underrated collaborators, the more there are, the keener the competition will be and our work will attain higher

standards. "Then and only then will the status of the accompanists be raised and shall be recognised as artists in our own right and not like more accessories" (Moore, 1956, p.5).

Moore's approach to preparing before collaborating as well as the various practice methods he recommends for further partnerships are detailed. He recommends every pianist to focus on learning the words when it comes to new songs. It is commonly acknowledged that every well-written song's accompaniment portrays an image that is inspired by the lyrics. He makes an effort to elaborate on it and mentions in many ways that the accompanist and the singer, the one no less than the other, owe all to the words and depend on the words to guide them. Especially when it comes to strophic songs when the lyrics always have a different meaning, but the music stays the same.

It is pitiful to see, or hear, that singer trying to fire his singing with imagination and life, trying to vary her tone according to the mood of the poem, while the accompanist sits at the piano like a tired old horse, blissfully ignorant of anything that is going on. (Moore, 1956, p.10)

Future collaborators should take note of this advice from him: while proficiency in every language may not be required, having a working knowledge of others' languages will help us save time and enrich the value of our performances and musical creations (summary of his thoughts).

His practising tips were another engaging subject which in my opinion is essentially important for each pianist. He provides numerous solutions and an interesting perspective on the matter as it is: tone Quality, tone quantity, legato Playing, pedalling, dynamic reading, rhythm as well as composers' marking.

However, his explanation of how to experiment with the variety of tone that one wants to produce, is somewhat abstract and hard to understand.

To make the tone blend with a singer or violinist it is incumbent on the accompanist to cultivate the quality of his tone. Can be this done? Yes, by listening intelligently so that ears can detect instantly the difference between bad and good tone and by learning to use fingers with sensitivity and variety of touch. If the fingers respond obediently to the brain, they will satisfy the ear. (Moore, 1956, p.14)

The thing that fascinates me about him are those precise recipes that he provides us with on particular topics in the practise area. For instance, the piano part of numerous songs frequently uses arpeggiando, which brings often questions of accentuation Moore states clearly „I would give one general word of advice and that is, forget the bar lines”, I found this sentence quite useful and whenever I see above mentioned scheme I will implement it in practice together with his approach in tone quantity, he thinks that each of musician must have standart of tone values and during our practice times it is vitally important to observe this values, he uses examples from Brahms lieder and says that the same forte cannot be used in *Nachtigall* and in *Der Schmied*, It shows that there are more varieties of tone and colour than there are labels like piano and pianissimo to tag on to them and the way to produce the quantity of tones goes to the lyrics knowledge that he talked before.

An additional topic he highlights is independence of the eye and hand. He states that in order to focus the eyes on the vocal line, one must learn to forget about the fingers, especially when one believes they are familiar with every detail of the piece. This is an unusual approach for me to implement.

This will correct any tendency he may have had to adopt a false tempo. He will see that certain phrases must be sung in one breath, and he may have to quicken slightly the tempo of the whole song to make this possible. He will make a mental note of the place where he believes the singer will breathe. (Moore, 1956, p.25)

Furthermore, he writes about the difficulties with orchestral score (piano reduction) accompaniment. It is not easy to enrich the accompaniment by enlarging the chords to be sure that the singer will get sufficient accompaniment and we will be a proper substitution for the orchestra. Moore believes that understanding the orchestra score will make it easier. Knowing the score helps the accompanist to visualise the orchestral sound and after that may try to get the woodwind, string, and other instrument tonal effects.

It is a bit challenging for him to talk about the partnership between piano and violin, since the musical meaning of violin and cello sonatas are less obvious than the musical meaning in songs. As well as one should always work on technical aspects when it comes to sonatas, balance, matching the violin tone, unanimity, according to him those are the things that we as collaborators will be forced to practise as long as we are alive and then never feel quite certain that they will be perfect at performance.

Moore highlights one important thing which is related to sound during piano and violin partnership. He thinks that the piano lid should always be raised on the short stick, he says that violinists are always mistaken when they imagine that their voice will not be heard clearly with the piano lid open. Same applies to all dynamics, for instance, if the lid is open during the pianissimo, softest tones will have caring quality with the least possible pressure



from the fingers. "Indeed it is not impossible that pianoforte makers had this in mind when they constructed their instrument with a short stick" (Moore, 1956, P.43).

I want to finish my analysis of Gerald Moore's approach to this research topic with the following comment, which I considered is sufficiently notable to see that empathy and support of women at that time

In England today there are many good woman accompanists who play for teacher's classes or who are used for coaching purposes, but they never seem to get known, or to emerge from the studio. This is because of old fashioned prejudice held by many soloists who say: "I do like to have a man at the piano." At the risk of queering my own pitch, I ask why must it be a man? Personally, If I were a soloist I would raise no objection to a lady accompanying me - anywhere. (Moore, 1956, p.6)

And like this I would like to take a look at female Collaborative pianists, which are quite few and interestingly enough there are almost no interviews with or writings by female collaborative pianists. In the future it would be important to map out the knowledge that we probably are missing from female artists. They are and could be role models for many pianists such as myself.

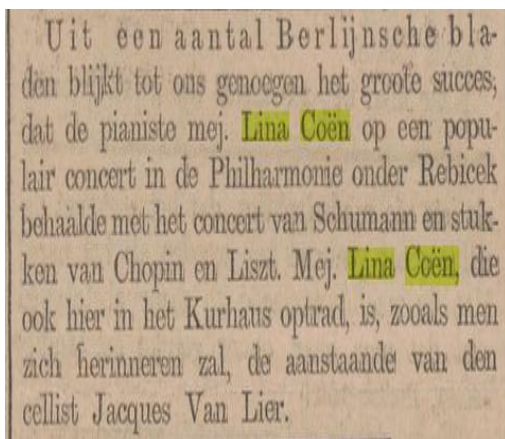
## Lina Cohen

An evening gown would be out of place. Woman invades the orchestra pit not with the idea of making a sartorial display of herself, as is the case in so many instances where the box of the opera house is concerned. I want to attract attention solely by the calibre of my reading of the score of Carmen. There is not a role in the opera in which I have not coached singers who are among the foremost exponents of those particular roles, and this, I believe, gives me a greater grasp of the possibilities of the score, than perhaps some conductors display. (Wikipedia, 2024)

Lina Coen is a French-American musician of Dutch descent. She won acclaim as a pianist and vocal coach and was the first woman in the United States to conduct an opera. Unfortunately, I could not find information on her thoughts about collaborative playing but I was inspired by reading about her, and she served as a role model in the process of writing this thesis. Coen graduated from the Conservatoire de Paris, where she studied piano with Élie-Miriam Delaborde. She gave her first known concert in the Kurhaus in Scheveningen in 1896 and since then she has had an incredibly active career as a solo pianist throughout Europe. It is important to highlight that she tried her hand in composing to write as well,

between 1896 and 1906, three of her compositions were published in Paris in the series "*Pensée: pour piano*".

Her debut as a collaborative pianist was in New York in Carnegie Hall, she became an official pianist of soloists from Metropolitan Opera and had several tours with them. The next year, Coen obtained a contract for a series of 45 concerts throughout Germany. With her fiancé, she was part of a chamber music trio, with violinist Margarethe Baginsky and the German newspaper *Neuen Zeitschrift für Musik* found it a worrisome sign of possible times ahead, should women's rights activists get their way, that the two women overpowered the man.



Uit een aantal Berlijnsche bla-  
den blijkt tot ons genoeg het groote succes,  
dat de pianiste mej. Lina Coën op een popu-  
lair concert in de Philharmonie onder Rebicek  
behaalde met het concert van Schumann en stuk-  
ken van Chopin en Liszt. Mej. Lina Coën, die  
ook hier in het Kurhaus optrad, is, zooals men  
zich herinneren zal, de aanstaande van den  
cellist Jacques Van Lier.

(German newspaper)

She conducted the opera for the first time in 1917, and that was the time when she made history as the first female opera conductor in the United States.

### WOMAN WIELDS THE BATON.

#### Lina Coen Conducts a Performance of "Carmen" in Garden Theatre.

A woman wielded the conductor's baton in the orchestra pit of the Garden Theatre last night for the Cosmopolitan Opera Company's performance of "Carmen," and as far as is known this is the first time in this city that such a thing has happened. The conductor was Lina Coën, a Frenchwoman who, before the war drove her to this country, was an assistant to the late Frank King Clark, who achieved fame abroad as a vocal teacher. Mme. Coën has been teaching during her residence here. Her costume was a plain tailored suit, "simple and efficient," to quote her own words, because, in her opinion, an evening gown would attract too much attention and therefore be out of place. The opera will be repeated tonight, when Arnaldo Conti will conduct.

(Article in the New York times.1917. p. 10)

# Martin Katz

Martin Katz is an American pianist, educator and conductor, primarily known for his work as a collaborative pianist who has been dubbed “the gold standard of accompanists” (University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance, 2024). By The New York Times, Editions of Baroque and bel canto operas prepared by Katz have been performed at the Metropolitan Opera, the Houston Grand Opera, and Opera Lyra Ottawa. He was collaborating with the world’s most celebrated singers in recital and recording. Marilyn Horne, Frederica von Stade, Kathleen Battle, David Daniels, Karita Mattila, and Jose Carreras are among his regular partners, and he has recorded for RCA, CBS, BMG, EMI and Decca labels. He also became Musical America's "Accompanist of the Year" in 1998.

Katz currently teaches collaborative piano at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance. He is the author of the book, *The Complete Collaborator: The Pianist as Partner*.

The contents in his book are absolutely different from the book of Gerald Moore, which is interesting to analyse. Katz, contrary to Moore, believes that breathing and singing is a focus area. He thinks that breathing and singing are beneficial for musicians of all kinds, and particularly for those for whom air is not required for their musical instrument to work. Instrumentalists can play several hours without taking a breath and that is precisely the problem.

Ignorance of this issue might limit a solo pianist’s success somewhat, but for accompanists it would be a disaster. Whether it be a physical necessity or an artistic choice, nothing approaches the importance of breathing in the quest for true collaboration. (Katz, 2009, p.7)

Along with Moore, Katz discusses the significance of the singer's part and how important it is for pianists to know it even before the first rehearsal “If you cannot sing it, you cannot play it” (Katz, 2009, p.7). Katz is categorising each breath that the soloist takes among the following three groups: Type one where nothing needs to be done, second - where nothing can be done and third Permit Breath and Preserve Flow. First one is when the singer inhales adequately but finishes the phrase in a polished manner, accomplishing this without stopping ongoing flow and tempo of the piece. He says that in those kind of situations pianist should stay as a guardian of the music process, and mentions that even if our partner is absent for a moment we should play with more ego to mention that we are only game in town.

He uses several examples of those kinds of phrasing where singers might end the phrase a bit early while the pianist continues to play normally.

Example from the book p.10

EXAMPLE 2-2 Schubert, "An die Musik"

The image shows a musical score for Schubert's "An die Musik". It consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in G major, 3/4 time, with lyrics "Du hol - de Kunst, in". A checkmark above the final note indicates a breath mark. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment, starting with a *pp* dynamic. The bottom staff is the bass line, which has a few notes at the end of the phrase.

(check marks = breathe)

Example from the book p.10

EXAMPLE 2-3 Fauré, "Les berceaux"

The image shows a musical score for Fauré's "Les berceaux". It consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in B-flat major, 12/8 time, with lyrics "Le long du Qui les grands vais-seaux Que lahoule inclin - neen si-". A checkmark above the final note indicates a breath mark. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment, starting with a *p* dynamic. The bottom staff is the bass line, which has a few notes at the end of the phrase.

Second type of breath is when soloists breathe but cannot re-enter in tempo and the piano part is in rhythmic unison with the voice. He says that this requires nothing from the pianist beyond identification of the type of breath involved plus avid listening. "Pianist and indeed the composition itself are the hostages of the soloist's need to breathe" (Katz, 2009, P.7).

Nevertheless, it is our responsibility as collaborators to support and justify this type of stop in the flow of music.

Example from the book p.12

EXAMPLE 2-7 Schubert, "An die Musik"

Musical score for Schubert's "An die Musik". The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "du hol - de Kunst, — ich dan - ke dir!". The piano part includes a *p* dynamic marking.

Example from the book p.12

EXAMPLE 2-8 Brahms, Clarinet sonata in f minor, op. 120, #1, i

Musical score for Brahms' Clarinet sonata in f minor, op. 120, #1, i. The score is in f minor and 3/4 time. It features a clarinet line and piano accompaniment. The piano part includes *p* and *pp* dynamic markings.

And the last one - Permit Breath and Preserve Flow.

He uses a piano piece as an example to demonstrate this type of technique.

EXAMPLE 2-12 Chopin, Nocturne in E-flat, op. 9, #2

Andante  
p  
espress. dolce  
Ped. \*Ped. \*Ped. \*Ped. \* Ped. \*Ped. \*Ped. \*Ped. \*

Example from the book p.16

He considers the right hand to be the soloist and the left hand to be the accompanist. A little extra out-of-tempo time is required to end the first phrase gracefully, breathe, then re-enter with the first pick-up note of the second phrase. He demonstrated this by singing himself, noting that it is not an intellectual judgement but rather based on physicality. The eighth note is not enough for an expressive soloist, and the singer might end the first phrase recklessly and abruptly. The pianist takes a breath before the eleventh left-hand note in the bar and continues in time. With just a little extra time, the right-hand breaths before the twelfth note in the bar, and the music never seems to stop. If the pianist tries to phrase after the eleventh note while waiting for the partner, he ensures us that “you will hear the music stop dead in its tracks and this is not a collaboration” (Katz, 2009, p.16-17).

## Susan Tomes

Susan Tomes is renowned as a soloist and a chamber musician.

She has won numerous awards as a pianist, both on the concert platform and in the recording studio. She grew up in Edinburgh and was the first woman to take a degree in music at King’s College, Cambridge, when co-education arrived at the college after 400 years. Her career encompasses solo, duo and chamber playing. She has been at the heart of the internationally admired ensembles Domus, the Gaudier Ensemble, and the Florestan Trio, winners of a Royal Philharmonic Society Award. In 2013 she was awarded the Cobbett Medal for her services to chamber music (Tomes, 2024).

In one of her blogs, Susan shares her thoughts about why pianists dislike referring to themselves as accompanists. She says that all of the old generations’ composers used to

write their operas or symphonies on the piano, so in their works piano is the instrument which carries musical arc from the beginning to the end. She refers to Classical era composers and explains that, while writing for the piano and another instrument such as the violin, Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms thought of the piano as 'first among equals'. On the title page they called their duo sonatas 'for piano and violin' and not the other way round.

Susan Tomes shows us how the overall attitude changed during the centuries, she brings an advert from a Viennese newspaper in 1789: "Wanted by a nobleman: a servant who plays the violin well, to accompany difficult piano sonatas" (Tomes, 2020).

The main assumption she makes from this is that the violin accompanies the piano, and that the difficulty resides in the piano part.

Furthermore, she brings an example from the 19th century when Paganini caused a shift in the way music for piano and single-line instruments was advertised. Gerald Moore also mentions that in advertisements the name of the single-lined instrumentalist has been always printed in big letters, and the pianist's in small letters. The content of the music had not changed. Musically, it was still piano-based and another outcome from all of this was that "soloists" thought that they should be paid more than the "accompanists"

## Method

To carry out the aim of the study, I have been collecting literature about collaborative pianists, analysing their thoughts about key features and as preparation for the admission exams I tried to implement the ideas and theory into my practice routine, part of it has already been reflected on my result, but mostly the process will take a long period.

## Challenges and key features

Previous chapter concluded some of the fundamental components of the collaborative pianist by some prominent pianists in the field. In the next chapter I will go into some specific details pertaining to the craft.

## A Vista

Since the very beginning in the piano world, it has always been a matter of how good one is at sight-reading. Even as a solo pianist, it is quite a good skill if you are a good sight-reader.

In my case, I do not think I am so skilled, maybe not super bad, but I have not been trained much in sight-reading. There was no need for this, I was always focused on fast learning, which also includes good sight-reading, but, a vista playing is on another level in the collaborative world, you might be able to perform with another instrumentalist or singer but within the same tempo, which is even more challenging, I suppose.

According to many specialists, sight-reading and transposing are a matter of practice. The more sight-reading one is forced, the better it is. Each recommendation that I have read about a vista playing says that one does not have to play everything, the important thing is to not make the tempo stop and to read almost two bars before, as well as the ability to make a group of notes in the best possible way. As far as I can tell from that kind of advice, sight-reading is something that also requires learning.

Moore believes that "a good sight-reader is an expert skipper" (Moore, 1956, p.35) and that it is completely unnecessary to glance at notes before beginning to play. All you need to know is the key, tempo and number of beats in the bar. This method is now impractical for me since every time I require to play a vista, I gaze at it and play it in my head for as long as I can. However, this may not always be a possibility, so I must train myself in the manner described above.

Technical abilities must be practised constantly in order to easily play blocked chords, arpeggios and scales, without reading every single note, but to functionally understand music along with the music style that is supposed to be played.



An article “The collaborative pianist – Skills and excellence” (Şuteu, 2021, p.4) illustrates multiple aspects of sight-reading and demonstrates how everything connects to each other

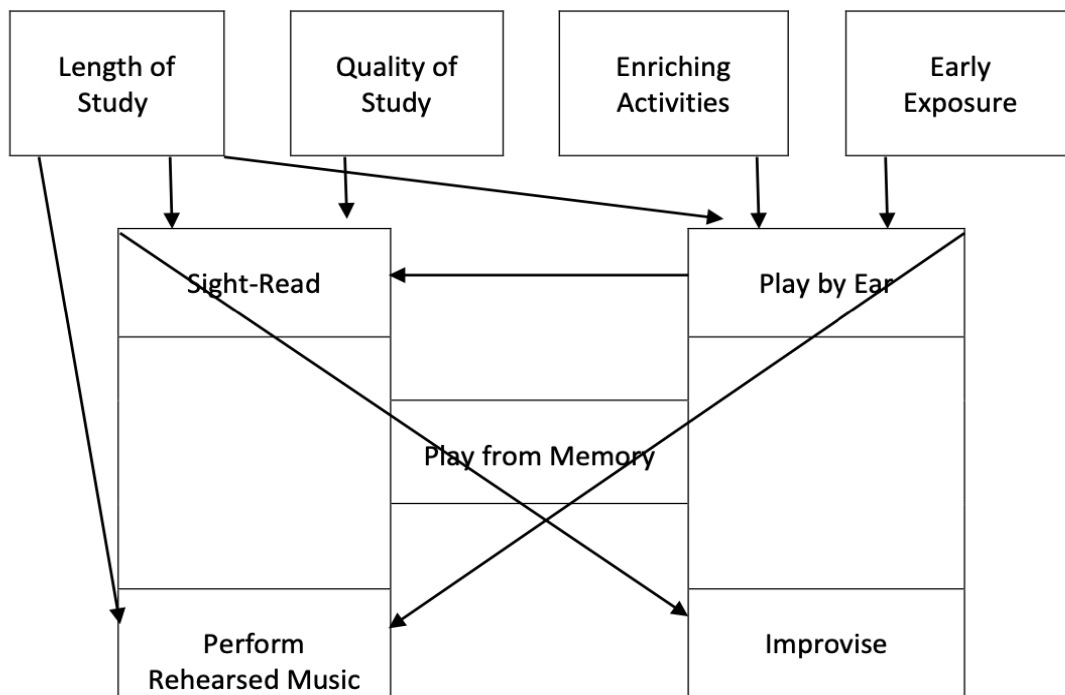


Figure 1. Theoretical model (McPherson, Bailey, & Sinclair, 1997, p.107)

Sight-reading, playing by ear, playing from memory, improvising and performing rehearsed music depend on the main four variables, such as the length and quality of study, enriching activities and early exposure. There is strong interdependence between all the factors presented above.

## Transposition

Good collaborators, especially with singers are often required to put songs up and down half or whole tone, and many times it is right before the concert. Moore explains that there are two aspects of transposition. First one when the transposition is hard once the brain functions in a new key, then it suddenly becomes easy, and the second when the song is not as difficult in terms of transposition, but it is quite much harder to play it in any other key than it is original. When in fast movement fingers and positions are changing and to play it without preparation is quite difficult.

In my case, If I have any sight-reading experience, I cannot say the same when it comes to transposition, and I am so far away from Brahms who transpose Kreutzer sonata directly half-tone up, because the piano was so flat and violinists would not tune the strings down.

I could not find any practical tips from the collaborators mentioned above. More simply states that sight-reading is like transposing - a matter of practice (Moore, 1956, p.35).

As one of well-known Pianist Donald Nold (the founder of the accompanying program at Manhattan School of Music) mentions, not everyone can be an excellent sight-reader, but they may have a knowledge of the repertoire, the most important thing, is that knowledge of tradition which will also give us advantage in sight-reading (Nold, interview, January 13, 2016). Knowledge of tradition covers foundational aspects of performance practice and interpretation, including tempo, ornamentation, and presentation, and provides an important context for the style of a performance. The collaborative pianist is often relied upon to be a source of wisdom in this arena. Nold explains that because it cannot be gained from books, this knowledge is central to the need for academic programs in collaborative piano (Sundstrom, 2016, p.32).

## Languages

The language issue is one of the most important concerns for me, as I am not fluent in all of the languages required in this field of studies, but as stated by Moore, having a working knowledge of others' languages will help us save time and enrich the value of our performances. Meantime I also found out that once you know the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) it will make your work as a collaborator much easier.

		monophthongs				diphthongs			
VOWELS	i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:	ɪə	eɪ			
	sheep	ship	good	shoot	here	wait			
	e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ		
	bed	teacher	bird	door	tourist	boy	show		
	æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ		
	cat	up	far	on	hair	my	cow		
CONSONANTS	p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g	
	pea	boat	tea	dog	cheese	June	car	go	
	f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ	
	fly	video	think	this	see	zoo	shall	television	
	m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j	
	man	now	sing	hat	love	red	wet	yes	

**Phonemic Chart**  
voiced  
unvoiced

The 44 phonemes of Received Pronunciation based on the popular Adrian Underhill layout  
adapted by EnglishClub.com

Figure 2: International phonetic alphabet

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is an alphabetic system of phonetic notation based primarily on the Latin script. It was devised by the International Phonetic Association in the late 19th century as a standardised representation of speech sounds in written form. The IPA is used by lexicographers, foreign language students and teachers, linguists, speech–language pathologists, singers, actors, constructed language creators, and translators (wikipedia).

## Orchestral effect

Playing piano transcriptions for orchestral accompaniments is both an essential need and a challenge for collaborators, as we have to substitute the entire orchestra and usually those transcriptions are not very pianistic, so the collaborator should somehow enrich the accompaniment by enlarging the chords or making the bass double so that one can give proper support as an orchestra substitute.

But at the same time to make this orchestra effect on piano, you really need to know the orchestral scores to be able to get the tonal effect of strings, woodwind or brass.

Interestingly enough to take a look at Moore's precise receipt for the orchestral effects.

Generally, where operatic arias are concerned, the pianist need not be too pedantic or precious in his playing, and liberal use can be made of the sustaining pedal. To get the effect of brass, for example, it is obvious that

nicety of touch must be thrown to the winds. The accompanist must fairly dig into the keyboard. To get the effect of a full string tone the pianist has difficulty in remembering passages in Verdi, Puccini, Massenet, etc., where the accompanist can literally throw his full weight about so that the listener is not too patently aware of the fact that the music really does need an orchestra. The Prologue from *Pagliacci* is a case in point. (Moore, 1956, p.39)

According to my experiences, every time I play an orchestral transcription for the piano, it is always helpful to write down all of the instruments written in the orchestral score.

[King Philip's monologue from Act IV of Verdi's "Don Carlo." - Nino Chikhelidze, Levan Makaridze](#)

I remember when I was studying this aria from Don Carlo, how much I practised the prologue to imitate strings and then the solo part by cello, as well as the part with strings in the right hand and wind in the left hand; furthermore, this is a difficult moment also because the sound varies on each piano, and I had to adjust to each one. What I have learned the most from this is that my imagining sound, combined with the singing, could get the most out of what it was required.

## Difference between accompanying singers and instrumentalists

There is a difference between accompanying singers and instrumentalists. First of all, it is about musical meaning, that is always a challenge for musicians to understand the heart of the piece. While in singing, everything is apparent, and the words of a song make the composer's idea unmistakable. Also, with an instrumentalist, you're using scores, but the singer usually does not use a score. So, you have to rely on their memory, and you have to be very fast to cover up all of their mistakes.

With strings when it comes to a tempo, you set a tempo and you pretty much stay there. In vocal music, it's completely different. The text rules much more. There may be a certain starting tempo, but it may have to change, and have to adapt with the text. You should also

remember that each voice is unique. You have to evaluate yourself. Even if the score says forte, you still cannot be too loud, because you will cover the singer.

When it comes to playing with strings and performing works that are clearly written as equal parts, for example violin sonatas, it is obvious that it is a matter of collaboration, rather than accompaniment. It can also be noted by the sheer difficulty of the score in sonatas, being sometimes almost in the difficulty range of piano concertos. "In the Beethoven sonatas, for instance, there are passages which you will be forced to practise as long as you live and then never be quite certain that they will be perfect at performance" (Moore, 1956, p.43).

To conclude this paragraph, one of my significant challenges is that throughout my solo piano career, I instinctively became accustomed to making music the way I wanted and felt it. Individualism in the music-making process has always been the most appealing part of me. I usually rely on my intuition and emotions to perceive the music, of course within the framework but every detail which emerges from me is solely my responsibility and no one else's. While being a collaborative pianist and a part of some unit makes things opposite. I will most likely be unable to rely on my intuition at any time and will have to always prove something using material.

I'm looking forward to discovering how this new version of my musicianship works, how it influences my individualism, and how I can find freedom in a collaborative world.

## Preparation for an upcoming admission

During spring of 2024 I did the admission exam for a Master Music Drama - Répétiteur which consists of two rounds. In the first round I am supposed to play two pieces of solo music, one piece should be one movement from a classic style sonata, and the other one a piece from the romantic period as well as two obligatory opera arias which are performed together with a singer. One is in Swedish.

o Peterson Berger: From Arnljot, Vainos second song, "Vems röst hör jag

ropa över fjällen?"

o Tjajkovskij: From Eugen Onegin, Lenski's aria, "Kuda, kuda"

The first round is not as challenging for me, or at least not something I have not done before. I intend to make sure that each voice that is created for orchestral instruments has a

resembling voice on piano so that I can demonstrate changes in sound, especially in the beginning of Tchaikovsky's aria where in the first two lines 4 different sounds are presented (flute, clarinet, cello and strings). I try to use Moore's advice and play with my whole weight when it comes to imitating strings.

Obligatorisk operaaria:

Tjajkovskij: Ur Eugen Onegin, Lenskis aria, "Kuda, kuda"

## Eugen Onegin

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(Zaretsky walks over to the mill-dam and enters into conversation with the miller, who has just appeared in the background. The miller shows him the wheel, the millstones, etc.)  
 (Заретский отходит к плотине и вступает в разговор с мельником, который в это время показывается в глубине сцены, указывая ему на колесо, жернова и т.д.)

LENSKY (continues to sit and meditate)

ЛЕНСКИЙ (продолжает сидеть в задумчивости)

Andante, quasi

How far, how far, how  
 Ku-da, ku-da, ku-

the rises and comes forward  
 (Встает и подходит к

In the second round, I have to admit, there is more to work on, or, it will be more correct to say, finding out how to work on it.

The list of requirements looks like this:

- one opera extract which you get from the jury the day before and must study together with singers in front of the jury without previous rehearsal.
- one obligatory opera ensemble performed with a singer and conductor.
- o Johann Strauss: from Die Fledermaus act 1, nr 4, Terzett „So muss allein ich bleiben“
- one a prima vista sample, singing.
- A prima vista sample, piano.
- Interview

Of course, I've done each of the activities on the list several times, but they're not things I do on a regular basis or with what I consider comfortable.

I want to describe how I am trying to improve with the above mentioned skills.

First clause, like I said, is not so usual for me. I cannot correct the singing position of a singer but I can work with a musical flow where I can share my ideas as a musician, or correct the language mistakes if I am aware of that specific language. I started to watch masterclasses for the singers with coaches so that I will have some more ideas about the working process with singers, which I will certainly use in my lesson.

For the second clause: one obligatory opera ensemble performed with a singer and conductor Johann Strauss: from Die Fledermaus act 1, nr 4, Terzett „So muss allein ich bleiben“, I can say that I am more or less prepared for that the task; the tough part is that the tempo changes frequently, and I need to adjust each of them by observing and following the conductor. To rehearse for that duty, I'm asking all of my musician friends to conduct me in an unexpected way so that I can train myself to be more sensitive and enhance my reaction time.

On a prima vista sample, singing

Singing is not a technique that I have been trained in, I may have an acceptable ear, but a vista singing and playing together is something I have never practised in my studies. I tried to enhance this by singing psalms that do not go over one octave. I started by just naming the notes, but after about a week, I began to pay attention to the lyrics as well. Then I started singing my solo piano pieces while playing the left hand I was singing the melody. Even though it wasn't the best result after a few weeks, I was able to visualise myself singing.

A prima vista sample, piano

It is common for pianists to do a vista playing throughout their education, perhaps not with much practice, but at least we all have some sort of experience. I have not done much prima vista with vocalists or instrumentalists, but I believe I am able to handle this. I tried to do what Moore suggested, to have an awareness of style, so I took Schubert Lieder and several Arias from Mozart operas. Everyday I played through individual components so that my eyes would become adapted to the structures, which were supposed to help me to react more quickly to other pieces with the same pattern.

## Discussion

### Thoughts regarding the admission process reflected by the study material from the theory part

In this chapter, I will summarise important components of the opera academy's entrance exam and illustrate the benefits I gained from research that contributed to my preparation process.

As I previously mentioned, the first round was pretty much standard. The challenging element was being able to play with singers without previous rehearsal, here I tried to implement Moor's advice that I mentioned above (page 8), I tried to dwell on the vocal line and forget the fingers, as well as started to breath where I thought that singer would breathe, It was easier for me since, I could mainly focus on vocal line, I intend to utilise this method in my practice routine.

After the first round, I was provided with recitative and aria "E susanna non vien!.. Dove sono" from the Marriage of Figaro that I needed to learn for the second day and give the lesson to a singer provided by them without prior rehearsal. I followed Gerald Moore and Donald Nold's suggestions about knowing the text, as well as the instruments from the orchestra, so that I could give more orchestra sounds along with advice based on the text. I was fairly satisfied with my preparation process, but as I began to play even after the first bar, I noticed that the singer was so good that it was rather difficult to find any sort of notice or advice that I could discuss. So I began to carefully follow details and phrases that could always be workable from my perspective as a pianist. I could say that I made myself survive but at the same time my expectations from myself were higher than I actually performed. The next task was to perform an opera ensemble with singers and a conductor, as this was a new piece for them as well, it was slightly shaky in some places, but I believe I followed them and the conductor as much as I could. Playing sight-read was the next and here, I can state that the methods of Nold or Moore that I attempted to utilise in my preparation for the exam were not effective at all. It does not mean that it will not be useful in future but for now I could not find them useful. I have a few ideas regarding why. Firstly, I believe it was due to my nervousness, and secondly, as previously stated, I expected an aria or lieder, but instead received Chopin's Mazurka. It was not very difficult, but as I already stated, it was far from my expectations, and my mind began to panic, which affected my reading process, but for now, I believe that the result will be reflected in the long run.

After a month, I learned that I have been admitted to the program. The entire writing process first and foremost aided my mental preparation, not only for this particular exam day, but also for the general area in which I intend to study and work. Throughout the research process and the questions that I had, it led me to contact with musicians who are already working in that field and obtaining answers and knowledge from them was one of the most trustworthy and useful methods that I could have had at the start of my path.



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