

9. 79
THE BILLY MAYERL SCHOOL OF
MODERN SYNCOPATION FOR
THE PIANOFORTE

WORKING INSTRUCTIONS
FOR THE
PERSONAL-DEMONSTRATION
COURSE

IN

Modern Syncopation

BY

BILLY MAYERL

INTRODUCTION

To the Student :

The Personal course which you now have before you for study has been the subject of much care and thoughtful experiment on the part of Billy Mayerl and the tutorial staff of the School. Many methods were considered. We could have put before you a series of records packed with nothing but pianoforte demonstrations by our Principal, referring you to this book as a key to the whole. The need for cross-reference from the records to the instructions, however, would only have caused confusion. After consideration, we have come to the unanimous decision that these personal lessons from Billy Mayerl, given entirely so that you may listen without interruption, are by far the most valuable method.

It is in the spirit of personal lessons, therefore, that I ask you to regard and to study these records. First of all, I urge you to read the instructions which appear here and to follow them exactly. If you will do this, you will definitely obtain benefit from this course far beyond your expectations.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Geoffrey Clayton". The signature is written in dark ink and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Director of Studies, BILLY MAYERL SCHOOL.

HOW TO STUDY THIS COURSE

First of all, read these instructions through carefully, AND FOLLOW THEM TO THE LETTER.

THE SPEED OF THESE RECORDS IS 78

This means that the records must be played at 78 revolutions to the minute. If you doubt the accuracy of the speed indicator on your gramophone, you may test it in the following way :

Fix a piece of white sticking plaster at a point on the edge of the turntable. Bring this round to a point where it is easy to watch as it passes. Start the motor and count the revolutions by watching the plaster pass its given point. Employ a watch with a second hand for timing purposes.

Use good quality, loud-toned needles for this course. It is advisable to change the needle for each side of each record. Keep the records in their album when they are not in use.

You will notice that there are divisions in the playing track of the records at various points. These denote the different sections in Mr. Mayerl's instruction and have been made so that you may go back over any part of the record without damaging it. Where these pauses come, they are denoted by a series of asterisks in the instruction relative to the particular record and side, thus :

* * * *

You will see that each side of each record deals with a given lesson.

First of all, read this lesson through, and *understand* its contents, even though you may not be able to put them into practice on the keyboard.

Next play the record or records referring to this lesson and listen carefully to the contents, so that you

may learn what you have to do, and what it sounds like when performed correctly.

Then go back to your lesson and begin your serious study of it. Refer to the records as and when necessary. Take the length of time indicated by the Director of Studies, and do your best to make your playing as like Billy Mayerl's as you can.

Finally, when you are satisfied with your own work, go through the record again and see how it compares with the demonstration given.

Deal with each record in this way, and success is assured. Do not think to obtain any benefit from these records by merely rushing through them to see what they contain. You *might* eventually be able to *copy* Billy Mayerl by this means, but you would never *originate* ideas of your own.

Remember that practice, to be effective, must be regular. A little a day—*every* day—is better than a lot at irregular intervals.

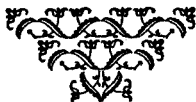
BEFORE YOU PLAY ANY RECORD, READ THE NOTES IN THIS BOOK REFERRING TO THE PARTICULAR RECORD AND SIDE.



A NOTE ON THE FOX-TROT "EV'RY HOUR OF THE DAY"

This fox-trot has been specially composed by Billy Mayerl for the purpose of his course of instruction in syncopation. He has not aimed at making it *original* so much as *typical*. It is meant to represent a type of dance number which very frequently occurs. If it appears to you to be reminiscent, or rather "like" other numbers you know, so much the better. That was Mr. Mayerl's object when he wrote it. The whole composition embodies all those points which are constantly cropping up in hundreds of similar fox-trots. Thus, it is possible to give you the maximum number of examples of treatment by putting them to practical demonstration in these records.

In both versions of the fox-trot, the original and the transcription, all bars are numbered for easy reference. In the transcription, notes on every treatment will be found wherever each occurs.



DEFINITIONS

A few definitions are added here, to avoid any confusion on the part of the student. These are the only terms used in this course of lessons which might give pause to some.

Tonic.—The note which gives the name to the key.
The key-note.

Dominant.—The fifth degree (or note) of the major scale.

The Common Chord.—The chord based on the key note of the scale.

Chord of the Dominant.—The chord based on the dominant of the scale.

Chord of the Dominant 7th.—The chord based on the seventh note above the dominant of the key, which generally resolves into the common chord. The dominant seventh chord is often referred to by the name of the note which is the dominant of the key in use. For instance, the dominant of the key of C major is G, and another name for the dominant 7th chord of C major is "the G 7th chord."

Modulation.—The passing from one key to another, by means of a note or chord, or a series of either or both.

Refrain.—A "refrain" is simply another word for a chorus.

Number.—A composition, a piece of music; e.g., "a fox-trot number": a fox-trot.

EXAMPLES IN THE KEY OF E \flat MAJOR :

Tonic Common Chord Dom. Dom. Dom. Dom.
Chord Chord 7th 7th Chord
or B \flat 7th
Chord

RECORD I.

FIRST SIDE.

Points dealt with occur in Lesson I.

Mr. Geoffrey Clayton, Director of Studies to the School, introduces Mr. Billy Mayerl. He wishes you to feel that personal touch and sympathy between teacher and student, and further to assure you that you are hearing Billy Mayerl *himself* both play and speak to you.

The fox-trot will be played completely through to you in its published, simple form.

Reference : Supplement to Lesson I.

* * * *

And now, the Chorus will be played through again with the *music* omitted in the "break bars." These bars will be counted out, however.

Reference : Lesson I, Fig. 3.



RECORD I.

SECOND SIDE.

Points dealt with occur in Lesson II.

The full transcription is played here, so that you may clearly have your aim in view. Listen carefully to it and try to construct your own on similar lines as you work through the course. It should encourage you in your studies.

* * * *

Straight away now into the left hand, because you know the importance of this already.

Note particularly the "Golden Rule" :

"Whenever you have a bar in which the harmony remains the same, you always play the four beats as follows :

- 1st. A tenth.
- 2nd. An after-beat made up of the same harmonies as your tenth.
- 3rd. A single note.
- 4th. An after-beat."

Reference : Lesson II, Exercises E and F.

Note the exception, which is called "the obvious change" :

"Whenever a common chord is followed by its own dominant or dominant 7th, the Golden Rule is altered, and the transcription for the left hand is called 'the obvious change'."

Listen carefully to the demonstrations which follow and which explain this.

Reference : Lesson II, Figs. 5 and 6, and Exercise G.

RECORD II.

FIRST SIDE.

Points dealt with occur in Lesson II.

The split bass is now explained and demonstrated. Notice in bar 16 of the refrain how the "Golden Rule" is broken. Whilst Mr. Mayerl plays this bar over to you, please have your music in front of you and follow the bar in the printed copy.

Reference : Lesson II, Figs. 10 and 11, and Exercise I.

* * * *

Now we come to the all-important Figure 12 and its solution in Exercise J. If you can make a transcription of this figure, which compares really favourably with the Exercise, then you are *really* well on the way to mastery of the left-hand work. But if not, it is essential that you go back over the ground until you thoroughly understand the processes of this construction. Unless you are quite certain about your left hand, it is useless for you to proceed to the work of the right. Listen to Mr. Mayerl's version of Exercise J, played here.

Reference : Lesson II, Fig. 12 and Exercise J.

* * * *

Notice that bars 7 and 8, 15 and 16, 23 and 24 all break our "Golden Rule."

Reference : Lesson I, Fig. 3.

Remember that breaks are bars of individual interpretation, and as such are outside the actual tune itself. If the bass of the above-mentioned bars seems strange to you, it is simply because you now hear them without their corresponding right hand. They will be dealt with fully later.

RECORD II.

SECOND SIDE.

Points dealt with occur in Lesson II.

This is a very important record, because it deals with points which are more easily demonstrated than described in writing. Accent and touch are the soul of music, as you will see if you compare Mr. Mayerl's two examples. The first is played "pianola-style," as it were; whilst the second has the spirit of interpretation infused into it.

* * * *

You will now grasp the importance of :

1. The correct use of accents.
2. The full use of the thumb for sustaining.
3. The proper treatment of the sustaining pedal.

* * * *

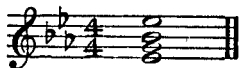
Mr. Mayerl wants you to realise at this stage that, whilst certain rules are standard and fixed, the same does not apply to the actual effects (or the carrying out of these rules). You may adapt an effect to create novelty or change, provided you keep to the spirit of the rule underlying it. In fact, you *should* adapt effects in this way. We do not wish you simply to copy Billy Mayerl slavishly, but to create a style of your own which is just as individual as his. The example which he gives you here shows exactly how you may change an *effect* without in any way breaking a *rule*.

RECORD III.

FIRST SIDE.

Points dealt with occur in Lesson II, III and IV.

First of all, you are to tune your gramophone so that it corresponds with the pitch of your piano. A chord of E \flat is given you to do this. Whilst the chord is being played on the record, strike the corresponding chord on your key-board, and adjust the speed indicator of the gramophone so that the record and the piano are in perfect tune with one another. This is the chord you require to play on the key-board :



TUNE YOUR MACHINE SO THAT THE CHORD GIVEN AT THE OPENING OF THIS RECORD IS ABSOLUTELY IN TUNE WITH THE SAME CHORD ON YOUR PIANO.

USE YOUR LOUDEST NEEDLES FOR BOTH SIDES OF RECORD III.

* * * *

Mr. Mayerl now goes straight away into the work of the right hand. *He assumes that you are now perfect in the left-hand work, but he is going to test you in this at the end of this record.*

Notice the instructions on speed and treatment. Remember that the speed of a number decides the type of number ; and the type of number decides the treatment.

Follow carefully Mr. Mayerl's analysis of our fox-trot as he transcribes it. Here are the first eight bars. Notice the break in bars 7 and 8.

* * * *

Now note, in the next eight bars, how monotony is avoided when playing a phrase which occurs twice in succession.

* * * *

You have now had the first sixteen bars, completely treated as to treble and bass. How do you feel about your left-hand work ? Are you ready for a little test ? Mr. Mayerl wishes you now to play a duet with him. He will play the right-hand part of these sixteen bars whilst *you* accompany him with the left-hand portion. Do not worry about the break bars for the moment ; you may ignore these if you wish.

When the needle runs on to the last section of this record, you will be given plenty of time to seat yourself comfortably at the piano. Mr. Mayerl will also warn you and will count a " bar for nothing " (1-2-3-4) before you both begin to play. Will you now prepare, please.

* * * *

Your left-hand test with Billy Mayerl.

Reference : All Lessons II and III, and parts of Lesson IV, together with the exercises and examples contained therein.



RECORD III.

SECOND SIDE.

TEST YOUR TUNING AGAIN by means of the chord given on the other side of this record. USE YOUR LOUDEST NEEDLE for this side also.

Points dealt with occur in Lessons III and IV.

The figuration in the treble at the beginning of bar 1 of the chorus is typical. You see what a good "attack" this effect gives?

Reference : Lesson III, Figs. 35 and 36, and Exercise P.

Mr. Mayerl now wishes to see how you are progressing with your right-hand work. So will you play another duet with him? This time, *he* will take the left hand, whilst *you* play the right.

As before, he will give you plenty of time to go to the keyboard. He will also warn you and give you a "bar for nothing" (1-2-3-4). Will you prepare, please.

* * * *

Your right-hand test with Billy Mayerl.

* * * *

Reference : Lesson IV, Figs. 45 to 48, and Exercise R.

If you are not satisfied with *your* share of the above duet, proceed with your tuition, and return to it later.

Now notice the instructions and demonstration on resolutions. These "linking-notes" are *most* important.

You notice that the thumb plays an important part in the right hand just as it does in the left. Take note also of the arrangement of the triplets and dotted quavers. These effects emphasise the rhythm to a very marked degree.

Reference : Lesson IV, Figs. 42 to 44, and Exercise R.

* * * *

This record continues with a further note on resolutions.

* * * *

The very useful Charlston beat, though simple, often confuses until the idea is mastered. Billy Mayerl takes this opportunity of a short demonstration of the effect.

Reference : Lesson I, Fig. 4A.



RECORD IV.

FIRST SIDE.

Points dealt with occur in Lessons IV, V and VI.

Mr. Mayerl now gives you a demonstration of five typical resolutions. They are as follows :

The chord of E minor resolving to the chord A 7th.

The chord F 7th resolving to the chord of B \flat major.

The chord G 7th resolving to the chord of C major.

The chord B \flat 7th resolving to the chord of E \flat major.

The chord of G major resolving to the chord A 7th.

* * * *

Before you begin work on a piece of music, study the subject from every angle. You will thus avoid the hit-or-miss policy of groping in the dark. Remember what you have been told about speed deciding type and type governing treatment. Notice how many times the first eight-bar subject occurs : as you know, it must at least appear twice. Check up your break bars, and look in the bars immediately preceding and following for a hint as to suitable break treatment.

Reference : Lesson IV, Table of Treatments. Lesson VI, Figs. 67 to 70.

* * * *

Mr. Mayerl now plays the second subject for you. Notice that the left hand follows the rules already laid down.

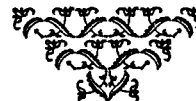
You also have the finish to the refrain played. As you are aware, this is the first subject repeated, except, of course, for the final two bars.

* * * *

Clear instructions on the verse follow. From these you will observe that all the ordinary rules apply, just as they do to the chorus, or refrain.

Note the change of key to G on bar 9. This change does not, of course, affect the original key of the piece itself, which is E flat.

Reference : All instructions applying to chorus work, except, of course, repeat bars and endings.



RECORD IV.

SECOND SIDE.

Points dealt with occur in Lessons V and VI.

The six breaks used in our fox-trot are now demonstrated by Mr. Mayerl. At the same time, he explains their construction. Once more we point out that breaks are outside the ordinary melody of a number, and individual taste may be followed in these bars. The only condition is that they must be generally in keeping with the type of number.

Break 1. Verse, bars 15 and 16, introduces a resolution, because one is needed at this point. That is what we mean when we say "study what comes before and after a break."

Break 2. Chorus, bars 7 and 8, introduces the obvious change in the left hand, for the reasons already given you.

Break 3. Chorus, bars 15 and 16, is an harmonic break. Notice the left hand crawl in bar 16.

Break 4. Chorus, bars 23 and 24. A resolution being necessary here to lead back to the first subject, it is embodied in the break and dealt with in a rhythmic manner.

Break 5. Chorus, bars 31 and 32 (the *first*-time ending bars), corresponds with the break in bars 7 and 8 of the chorus, for the simple reason that the situation is the same. This break has already been demonstrated.

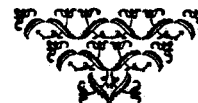
Break 6. Chorus, bars 31 and 32 (the *second*-time ending bars). The importance of an ending which is definite is well illustrated in this break. Note that a break "to end" only occupies seven of the eight beats available.

Reference : Lesson V, Figs. 56 to 58 and Exercise T. Lesson VI, Exercise W and the Book of Breaks.

Realise that the fox-trot dealt with above is merely typical of hundreds which can be transcribed on the same lines. As we told you before, if you will but examine the ground first, you can deal with *any* ordinary fox-trot.

Styles may change and effects may give place to others as fashion and tempo may dictate. But principles and rules never vary. Billy Mayerl has given you all the foundation rules. Moreover, he has shown you how to put them into practice. With this material, thousands and thousands of students have been successful.

YOU, TOO, CAN BE JUST AS SUCCESSFUL.



CONCLUSION.

Whenever a point in this tuition shows up a weakness of your own, turn from the records for a few days and master that weakness by a further study of the course.

Don't rush anything. Remember, you are gaining a new outlook concerning printed music, and forming new habits on the keyboard. New habits take time to become "part of yourself." Don't try to run before you can walk.

Once again: practice, to be effective, must be regular.

Do not despise scales, arpeggios and exercises. Ten minutes a day works wonders.

When you have completed your studies with the School, your work as a syncopated player has not ended. It has only just started.

Mr. Mayerl's own recordings, issued frequently by the Columbia Gramophone Co., are extremely useful for study. You may hear all the material of your studies put to the best possible use in these. You will also pick up many invaluable "tips," and will notice how new effects are produced without breaking the standard rules.

Remember to write to the School, if we can help you in any way.

Letters should be addressed to :

THE DIRECTOR OF STUDIES,
The Billy Mayerl School,
29, Oxford Street,
London, W.1

and you MUST quote your Reference Number, please.