

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 38: Modern Piano Fingering

Standing up from the couch, Victor clapped his hands delightfully, “All right. Mr. Rhine and Mr. Shavell have finished the improvement of the harpsichord a couple of days ago. Let’s try the new harpsichord today! All of you can come! I even feel that I shouldn’t call it a harpsichord anymore, since its tone, its range, and its volume are completely different now. For me, it’s a revolution in string instruments!”

Seeing the joy on his face, Lucien could tell that Mr. Victor was very satisfied with the improvement.

“Mr. Victor, as the initiator of the harpsichord improvement, you may like to give the new invention an official name.” When they were walking upstairs, Lott talked to his teacher in a flattering way.

“Yes, Rhine, Shavell and I actually talked about the name before. However, none of us could find a proper name for it.” Victor looked at Lucien with a mild smile on his face, “Lucien, what’s your idea?”

“My idea?” Lucien was a bit surprised.

“Of course, you made no small contribution to this. We’d like to hear your suggestion.” said Victor, “Well... Rhine appreciated its mechanical sophistication, so he wanted to name it mechanical harpsichord. I mean...Mr. Rhine is a talent in music, but definitely not good at naming a new musical instrument. Mechanical harpsichord doesn’t sound right to me at all.”

“What’s your idea then, sir?” Lucien asked.

“Um... I prefer to have a new name. This new musical instrument combines both the features of harpsichord and clavichord, and it has a much wider range of tones compared with its predecessors. So I would suggest the name to be... superchord!”

“.....” Including Lucien, none of the students present knew what to say toward this name.

“Well, what about the name ‘pianoforte?’” Lucien said with uncertainty.

“Pianoforte? It’s a pretty new name, but it sounds a bit weird.” Victor rubbed his chin with his hand in thoughts.

“The sounds produced by the new instrument were an extension of what the harpsichord could do.” Lucien was trying to make the weird name make sense. Lucien knew, in his world, the first piano made by the Italian harpsichord maker Cristofori was first called “pianoforte”. In Italian,

pianoforte meant “soft loud”. Lucien wanted to keep the name, because it would be sweet if he could play an instrument in this world which was almost the same as a piano on Earth.

“Pianoforte... Pianoforte...” Victor found the name was pretty interesting, “What about just ‘piano’?”

Lucien was very surprised that Victor would appreciate the name.

“I like the name, ‘piano’.” Felicia agreed, which was even more beyond Lucien’s expectation. It was the first time Felicia showed her commendation for any of Lucien’s ideas. A faint blush appeared on her beautiful face, “I don’t know why... I just somehow feel like it’s the proper name.”

Mr. Victor nodded with a bit of confusion, “Yes... I feel the same way, Felicia. Piano... It feels like it should be called piano... Weird...”

“Yeah...That’s how I feel as well.” Lucien was a bit nervous. He did not understand why both Mr. Victor and Felicia had a special feeling toward the name. Hurriedly, he changed the topic, “I can hear someone playing music in the practice room upstairs.”

“Yes, Mr. Rhine is here today. Didn’t I mention it?” Victor answered with joy.

Felicia’s face was now as red as a ripe tomato.

Rhine was sitting in front of the ‘piano’, his hair silver and his gesture charming. Without moving his shoulders and arms, his fingers were dancing on the piano keyboards, and a beautiful piece of music was flowing out of the musical instrument.

They indulged themselves in the joys of the song. No one made a sound until Rhine finished playing. All the students and Mr. Victor started applauding for the amazing performance.

“Mr. Rhine! As an excellent violinist, it’s amazing that your skill in playing clavichord is also great.” Felicia’s eyes were glowing, “Your performance was as good as Ms. Silvia’s!”

Standing from the bench, Rhine bowed to them elegantly with his right hand on his chest. He was trying to play the same song on both the clavichord and the piano to see the difference. He turned to Felicia and smiled, “I’m flattered, Felicia. But I can never compete with Ms. Silvia. It was she who wrote this song after all.”

Ms. Silvia was the best clavichord player in Aalto. Since clavichord was ideal for playing in a relatively small space, like in a living room or even bedroom, Mr. Silvia was often invited by the noble ladies to play in their places. It was said that Ms. Silvia was a close friend of Princess Natasha, and thus she enjoyed a high reputation in the association.

When Rhine was playing, Lucien paid more attention on the movement of his fingers. At the same time, he searched in his spirit library and found some useful books to refer to. According to these books, the modification of a musical instrument was the main cause of the changes in fingerings, as well as the holistic style. The piano standing beside them had eighty-eight keys and different pedals, which was already very close to a modern piano on Earth. Thus Lucien believed the modern piano fingering should be the best way of playing it.

On earth, people used to play clavichord with three fingers of each hand. Then the famous pianist, Bach, started using his thumbs and little fingers. When piano gained its popularity, Chopin made a second revolution in fingerings by also playing the black keys with his thumb and little finger.

When Lucien was reviewing the basic modern fingering books in his mind, Victor told Rhine about the new name of the instrument. It turned out that Rhine loved the name as well.

“Come here, Lucien. Sit in front of the piano. I’m gonna show you the basic fingerings.” Victor said to him.

Lucien trotted toward Mr. Victor with a bit excitement. However, as soon as he sat on the bench, Lucien felt something was not right. It was a bit too short for the piano.

“Mr. Victor, can I have a taller bench?” asked Lucien.

“Why? You’re not much shorter than Mr. Rhine. The height should be fine.” Victor was a bit surprised.

Extending his arms, Lucien tried to show it to Mr. Victor, “But if I sit on a bench of this height, I could only use my fingers and wrists. If I want to use my lower and upper arm, as well as my shoulder, I need a taller bench, otherwise it would be too awkward.”

“That’s because you’re not supposed to use your arms and shoulders. That’s too rude!” Victor was pretty serious, “Forget about what you’ve seen in the pubs. You saw how Mr. Rhine played, didn’t you? Did he ever use his arms and shoulders?”

Victor’s reaction was within Lucien’s expectation. Modern piano fingering was quite hard to be accepted by many famous pianists back in the days. In their eyes, pianists using modern fingering like Franz Liszt were rude. The way of swinging arms and shoulders in their mind looked very barbaric and it was like smashing the piano.

“Yes, Lucien. Those players in the pubs are not well-educated. I know... umm... you probably grew up in that environment, but now you’re here. It’s time for you to see what is noble music now.” Seizing the chance, Herodotus scoffed at Lucien’s words.

“Mr. Victor, the piano is a new musical instrument.” Lucien explained calmly, “I feel that how a musician plays the instrument should depend on the features of it. As an extension of harpsichord, piano is superior in both volume and range. With the strength of arm and shoulder, I feel its features could be presented in a better way.”

Rhine took a step forward and smiled at Victor, “I agree with Lucien. Remember the discussion about fingerings several years ago? Probably we can make a real difference again with it.”

Victor thought for a while and finally said, “All right, maybe we can give it a shot. But Lucien, if it later is considered wrong, it would take you a long time to forget the wrong movements and start over again. Are you sure you want to do this?”

Lucien nodded at Mr. Victor with a determined look.

In the other students' eyes, Lucien was no more than an arrogant boy trying to impress Mr. Victor and Mr. Rhine in this stupid way.