

Very few virtuosi have attempted a treatise on playing. And even less tell much that is helpful. The great cellist Emmanuel Feuermann wrote the beginnings of a book on playing. He died at the age of 39, never completing the treatise. Yet what he wrote contains many valuable insights.

I should explain before continuing why I believe the insights of a great cellist should be interesting to any serious musician. It is my opinion that at a foundational level the technique and musical intelligence needed to play at a virtuoso level are essentially the same for all instruments. After all, music itself is no different for a piano, singer, or trumpeter. Virtuosi play on that level primarily because of the way they think, both about the physicality of playing and the emotional and intellectual understanding of the music.

I have edited his unfinished notes to make the text less repetitive, and more coherent, at least to my thinking. What follows is in abridged form, with commentary by me in brackets. I have bolded comments of Feuermann's that I find particularly interesting. A less edited version can be found on the internet under the title *Notes on Interpretation*, by Emmanuel Feuermann.

The following is the treatise:

Feuermann on playing music and the cello

I intend to write neither a theory nor a method. I do not even know if this will be a thick book or a small pamphlet. I think that the title "Words of Advice" approximates what I want to say. I might say that a method describes how something should be accomplished. There have been many methods written with the best intentions and with much success. There will be directions for how one should draw the bow, what the different keys are, and surely some progressive exercises, so that the student achieves a certain facility and precision in his intonation, and if he is talented and has a good teacher, he will play fairly well up to a certain point.

Because of my experiences with musicians on my own instrument, and with violinists and pianists as well, I would maintain that the most important point, the most important goal, has been ignored. Only thus is it understandable that good players, if there were an attempt made to explain to them the goal and the route to accomplishing it, could without much effort improve their playing to an amazing extent. **I would like to say that it must first be clear what one wishes to reach and the how will play a secondary role.**

Hundreds of cellists have played for me and some of them have become my students. I nearly always ask two questions: why they have come to me and where do they feel they are lacking?

The answers are chiefly: faulty technique and depleted repertoire. Thus, the cellists who come to me have all completed their formal musical training, many of them have positions with orchestras either as first-desk solo cellists or in the section, or with quartets. They are persons one could call accomplished and expert in music.

What has always amazed me is that not a one has even come close to saying:

I realize that I do not play that badly but I find it impossible to express that which I have in my mind; or, I have a certain idea of how the cello should sound, but I cannot achieve it alone.

This has led me to the conclusion that most instrumentalists, at the stage when they are allowed to become independent by their teachers, should be able to think independently. They should be clear about their instruments and their music. Yet they are not prepared for such a situation, and are therefore hardly capable of developing alone. As sad as this may be, I can only thus explain to myself the standstill most musicians come to at a certain age and level. They feel that as soon as they leave the school or the teacher they have reached the height. But is not this the point at which the development begins.

The most blatant example is the prodigy. The prodigy is usually the performing voice of a good teacher: he is soft putty in the teacher's hands. I am of the opinion that a prodigy is not even destined for music, but that is another matter. In any case, it is a fact that most prodigies do not develop into artists, but at that moment when their own personality should make its appearance, they fail completely. [so do all the students that come to play for him, prodigy or not. So we could say that the problem of performers being unable to think and advance on their own, and having their own intelligent musical direction is common.]

Many reasons have been advanced for this and each case is different. Probably common to all is that, as long as they are under the influence of teachers or their often profit-seeking parents, they are treated as machines. No one tries to influence and develop their personal lives as musicians and people. On the contrary, to get the most out of the object - the prodigy - it is necessary to keep under strict control whatever appears to be the most advantageous as a momentary goal. But the prodigy is **completely unprepared for the future as an independent, thinking human being; he is completely defenseless. This development - which is considered normal - is similar for most musicians.**

Musicality and Technique

In my opinion, a war exists between technique and musicality. It brings with it only confusion, and makes a great performance virtually impossible. If one understands that by musicality is meant that one recognizes the intentions of the composer, then the other half of the term - "technique" - can be explained as possessing the real means necessary for bringing these intentions to fruition.

It is clear that musicality has priority; but for that very reason one should value technique even more highly, because it alone makes it possible to do justice to a composition.

I fear that the words "virtuoso" and "technique" will be falsely understood and misused. The word "virtuoso" comes from virtus which means ability and should also characterize one who possesses the ability that is necessary for the interpretation of music. Virtuoso should be a title of honor, and I believe that even among the greatest names on the stage, only a few deserve it.

Virtuoso includes: the greatest ability, respect for a piece of art, and the ability to fit one's personality to the art work. How many of us have this? How many of us believe we have it, and are mistaken about it? And how many could have it if they were guided properly during their development?

Consider that my present technique was developed in direct opposition to the way I was taught to play myself; and consider that I am seldom satisfied with my own playing and, if at all, only with parts, never with a whole performance.

[It is unfortunate that he never wrote about what he had to change in his technique and what he changed to.]

The question arises automatically, **why is it that in all other professions there is an effort made to raise the standard and the average, while in our profession, there is not even the slightest attempt to recognize existing lacks or more especially the need for correction?**

There is a shameful reason behind it - **one expects nothing special from the average cellist and accepts unquestioningly that the difference between the few really good cellists and the mass of cellists must be so great.** Besides, most people are too polite and few are interested enough to perceive the reasons for the difference.

From a "letter" to a student:

The Demands of the Instrument

I do not believe the cello must be played poorly. I will maintain that in the not-too-distant future the standards of cellists, will be raised. I cannot stand idly by and see so much talent and energy wasted. To me every serious-minded, ambitious young cellist is a living reproach: I am talented, I want to work; is it not possible that my talents can be developed?

They say one must be born a musician. Of the cellist one can say one is perhaps born to be a cellist, **but one is not born with the possibility to develop oneself fully.** Take your own case. You asked me in the lessons and again in your letter why no one had ever taught you to look at things the way I suggest. The answer is that in years of

studying with teachers of good standing you have not been led to recognize the simplest and most obvious principles, or almost any principles.

What I have told you is not that you did not grasp the idea in a certain piece or that you played out of tune. Rather I outlined to you your lack of knowledge of

- 1) how to look over a piece of music and recognize its structure and its moods,
- 2) the physics of your arms and their proper use,
- 3) difficulties of the instrument and bow and the rules and principles to overcome them, and
- 4) most important, how to bring these rules and principles to life and how best to apply them to the music.

It is surprising how few rules and principles there are and still more surprising how completely they change the entire style of playing. Believe it or not, my dear friend, the really outstanding string players, whether Kreisler, Casals, or Heifetz, are similar to each other in the way they use their muscular systems and handle their instruments and bows. The main differences lie in their different personalities, talents, and ideas, and only to a very small extent in their techniques, for which, again, physical differences are accountable. [unfortunately he never says what those rules and principles are.]

Analysis, patience, and endurance are the main requirements for your development.

Except for groups of fast notes where a given number of notes are one single rhythmical unit, there is not a note in music that should be played without expression or articulation. It can be compared to speaking, in which every syllable has its rhythm and phrasing within a sentence, according to its desired meaning. So, every note must be played according to the intended expression within the musical phrase.

As in a written sentence the only guidelines are the single words, commas, periods, question marks, etc., so in music notation we have only the bar lines, the bowings, the pitch and length of the single notes, and expression marks (accents, crescendi, etc., play quite a special role). What meaning can there be in a story recited in a monotone? Very little. The words may be recognizable, but there will be little real sense.

Cultured people grasp meaning by silently pronouncing what they are reading. This is an automatic process. **Only children and people not used to reading read with great effort and are content if they can get an approximately correct literal meaning, without troubling themselves with the real meaning.**

When you played for me, I showed you how little attention you have given to this way of looking at music, to this kind of approach, the most important one for a performer that I know of.

A combination of a responsible approach towards music and complete mastery of the instrument to make possible the realization of the music is the ideal toward which I am constantly striving and which I would like to pass on to my fellow musicians. Talent for music is another thing; here we are discussing intelligence.

Talent: the Scale

I dare say that it is not any more difficult to play well than to play poorly. Talent plays an important part in how well one plays, but talent alone, unless combined with intelligence, effort, and persistence, is not enough. One can say that the better balanced one can keep talent and general intelligence, as well as specific intelligence, the better one will play.

Naturally, years of practice will advance a performer, and a certain amount of facility, a beautiful vibrato, and a good tone quality are accomplished by many. I am always struck by the thought of how much better most musicians (who now just get along) would play if they had been led the proper way.

And what do I like to hear? A scale made up of clean tones, the fingers going down in such a way that the unequal strength of the fingers is hidden; a scale in which audible string crossings do not exist and in which the position is changed so quickly that the difference between a finger placed on the string and a change of position can hardly be felt; thus a row of notes of uniform strength, perfect in intonation and without disrupting, extraneous noises, these are the fundamentals of a scale, the ideal!

How does one approach this idea? Just by playing a scale over and over again, believing everything is done if the scale is played fast and approximately in tune? No. By having such an ideal, an imaginary, perfect, scale in the mind and in the ear, every cellist can overcome the difficulties of the instrument to a surprising extent.

You must also remember how much concentration it requires, how much careful watching and **especially careful connecting of notes** to give those "scales" (in Beethoven Sonata in A Major) - every note - the beauty which lies in the evenness of their execution.

To understand something - more important still to improve something - one must get to the foundation and analyze it; it is necessary to discover the relationships of the single components to one another. Then it becomes understandable - in cello playing - how much has been taken for granted, when the only information passed down over the years is harmful and twisted: it consists of poor judgment, incomprehensibility, ignorance, and a lack of perception of what on the surface is obvious. **As obvious and superfluous as it may seem to mention it, it is my opinion that the basic ills of poor playing lie in the absolute disregard of natural laws.**

The cello presents a performer with great opposition. This is true of most of the lower-register instruments. There are general physical rules, and for the instrument and bow specific rules, which one must learn and follow if one wants to go beyond the mere skills of music to stretch the capabilities of the instrument.

The body should be so comfortable and relaxed when playing that the use of the muscles, tendons, wrists, and fingers is in no way inhibited. It is not stressed often enough that the playing of an instrument is physical work and therefore the same rules can be applied to it as to any other activity in which skill is demanded. A certain amount of timidity leads musicians to fear that they will be considered craftsmen, not artists, if they give importance to the physical aspects of playing. But this is small-minded. To conceal such realities could harm the development of the real artist.

It is art and music which ennoble technique and skill and which, therefore, make the most talented, intelligent, and skillful musician into a true artist. It could be said that Rafael, even without hands, would have become a great artist. Yet one should not forget that Rafael had his hands. Technique is necessary that the genius, fantasy, spiritual power, and richness of ideas of a Rafael be allowed to rise above being just good art. In the painter are combined both the creating and the performing artist, which in music would be the composer and the interpreter.

Interpretation

In my viewpoint, one must be very clear about the various factors within the music, which are independent of one another, and whose union is found for the first time in the accomplished performing musician: a composer must have learned an instrument, must have mastery over it in order for his compositions to be performed. Thus, genius, talent, knowledge of the musical content are not sufficient to be even remotely just to the task of interpretation. Mastery of the instrument is necessary for this purpose.

How often, however, within the interpretation, the performer's grasp of the musical content and the performance itself - as well as musicality and technique - become separated from one another.

I believe that the question of a musical goal can be discussed and the goal is: within the interpretation, the incorporation of the most intelligent grasp of the music; and within the performance, a sense of responsibility to the smallest detail. I believe that much mischief has been done because hardly anyone has attempted to clarify the function of interpretation.

What is the function of the interpreter? Without wanting to appear to have found the only valid answer to the question, it is my opinion that the function of the performer is to become gradually acquainted with the mind of the composer, with the content of the composition, and then to fit his own personality or ability to them.

The ideal interpreter for me would be one who

- 1) is capable of grasping the period, the style, taste, and intention of all compositions which he must play,
- 2) possesses unlimited technique and interpretative skills, and
- 3) is capable of applying his technique and interpretative skills to the composition.

Such an interpreter does not exist. Even the greatest, most earnest performer will play best that music which lies closest to his nature, his character, and his general musical education, yet he will still try to grasp the spirit of the piece he is playing.

How sad, however, is the result reached by the performers who have never concerned themselves with these questions and whose interpretative skill is a closed book. How often I have heard a "famous" artist present a Bach gavotte as if it were a composition by Offenbach, and on the other hand a piece by Brahms or Beethoven in which, true, the notes were played, but with neither content nor meaning.

It could be compared to listening to a recitation of a poem in a language one does not understand. Where does that leave the sense of responsibility of interpreting? Is a composition the same as a piece of wax with no specific shape, or is it something to which an interpreter must first give shape? Or is not a composition the property of the composer, which is presented to us, the players, for its, final realization, an unknown property that we must oversee with the greatest conscientiousness and love, with the addition of all our spiritual and material powers.

Interpretation technique

I used the term "interpretation technique" earlier, and I would like to discuss it more fully. Usually the concepts of technique and musicality are played against one another - a player is characterized as a mere technician, but not musical, or else as a good musician, but without technique. Usually the latter is said in praise, as if musicality alone makes the artist, while the term "technician" is an unflattering description meant to disparage the artist. This debate about technique and musicality results in much nonsense and confusion, and what is worse, is aided through amateurism.

How simple it is for the musician who can really do precious little to display an air of authority, in that he boasts about his "musicality," but consciously demeans "technique" as something inferior, possibly even inartistic. Rating musicality above technique is tempting for many performers as well as for the public, because they can then believe that they are in the upper spheres; this justification is used by many players.

Well-intentioned people believe that through such an underestimation of technique, of basic skills, they can concentrate on more fitting goals in music - the spiritual - when in reality they open wide the doors and gates for those who cannot play; they sanction the desecration of music by these bluffers.

How many good artists would be found among the amateurs and in the audience, if the only consideration were the ability to recognize and comprehend the spiritual, the metaphysical, the technique of writing in music. I myself know hundreds of non musicians all over the world who are completely at home - as dilettantes - with either orchestra or chamber music literature, or with the instrumental repertoire, and about whom one could maintain that they have grasped the music.

Nothing is easier to answer than the question why they are not also capable of interpreting the pieces. Because they do not have the ability to direct a symphony or to present a concert on an instrument.

It is therefore useless to praise the musician above the technician; the comparison leads to confusion from which only the fakers and bluffers benefit.

There is little interest taken in analyzing or clarifying the word "technique" when speaking of an instrumentalist. This expression is usually employed to mean facility, secure intonation, and mastery over all the different types of bowing. If this is technique, how should one designate the ability to interpret a piece of music; for interpreting does not mean simply playing through a piece quickly but - after one has grasped the spirit of a piece, the important themes, the musical line and structure - then one has the means for presenting the music as one wishes.

I would say that the word "technique" should be used to express mastery over the entire mechanism. When one understands that mastery of the mechanism of an instrument creates the real artist as little as does simple comprehension of the music, we can then go farther to say that the combination of these two factors is still insufficient. It is what happens in the link between mechanism and music which counts, the application of the mechanism to the music.

The Scale: An Example of Interpretation Technique

When I look around myself among students, orchestra and chamber music players, and concert artists, I realize again and again the amazing fact that interpretation technique is neither known nor developed; at all events, not enough emphasis is placed upon it. We are concerned here that the two spheres the mechanical and the musical-not be viewed as separate entities, but that it be recognized that artistic playing in music can only be reached through uniting the two. The simplest example: a scale.

Is a scale only a technical exerciser? What is practiced in a scale? What can and should be practiced in a scale?

The answer to these questions is not as easy as it might appear, at least for me, **because the real purpose of practice is to change an idea into reality. Therefore, it is necessary to have some idea beforehand to give meaning to the practicing.**

For me, as for all who consider a scale as something more than a group of consecutive notes played fairly cleanly, the ideal scale would be comparable to a row of pearls of equal size and luster. Is such a perfectly played scale only a matter of mechanics? Or is it not rather a musical challenge which must be met if a scale is called for in a piece?

What must be practiced, watched for, and accomplished to do justice to a scale according to the very highest of musical demands?

- 1) Even articulation for each individual note, whether fingering, change in positions, or open strings are concerned.
- 2) As little difference as possible between going up the scale and going down.
- 3) Rhythmical independence of string and position change arranged so that, the notes are played on a string or in a position, groups of two or three note are formed.
- 4) No break in the scale because of bow changes.
- 5) Secure intonation.
- 6) Rhythm: a scale as practiced is a matter of mechanics.

Practice and Teaching

One of the most interesting topics in music and the teaching of music is practice. Here, as in everything, lack of forethought and interest commonly dominate. The pupil receives his assignment, he returns for the lesson, the teacher points out false notes here and there, changes a few fingerings, perhaps suggests more freedom of playing or scolds because the pupil has not given enough time to his lesson, and with this it is over. Even an untalented pupil will with this customary kind of instruction make progress over the years and reach a certain degree of facility.

Counter to this way of teaching is one in which one single method dominates. One teacher constantly emphasizes "technique." The pupil must practice long hours; above all he must practice difficult pieces, must concentrate on intonation and speed. The mechanism which is so necessary for the beauty and elegance of music is not practiced, the music must be played quickly and clearly. Its melodic qualities and its phrasing are hardly touched; and the real precision work on the instrument - which is as enduring and gratifying as the inside of a watch or as the work of a smithy - does not exist.

Sevcik, the famous violin teacher, said once - in my presence - to a pupil after he had completed the first movement of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto: "We can go on to the third movement, the second you will play well later on your own."

Another form of teaching, found mostly in Germany, is one in which music is considered a holy matter, so metaphysical - not of, but above the earth - that it would be a sacrilege even to hint at anything resembling technique within music.

During the lessons the student will be constantly reminded of the seriousness, the majesty, the nobility of the artistic profession. Technique or mechanism will be regarded with contempt, with the result that after years of such instruction, the young person - who believes himself an artist, an exceptional person - is sent out into the world, often conceited and arrogant, without being capable of conveying even a vague notion, whether true or false, of art.

I wanted to speak of practicing, but instead I have been preoccupied with my knowledge of teachers and pupils. How is painting taught? A master lets his pupils work in a studio and they are always under his supervision. No time is thus lost as often happens with us-for example, a pupil who misunderstands the teacher and works incorrectly on one specific thing for a week. He must then return home and unlearn what he has practiced. In the former method, the results will not be demonstrated to the teacher during the lesson, rather the teacher can witness and follow at first hand all the phases of the student's progress, his talent, his diligence, and can therefore pay more attention to the student's personality.

How different it is with us! Usually one hour a week is reserved for the lesson-and what are sixty minutes?-the student has time to play a little for the teacher, correct a little, and say: I will come again next week.

It is also necessary to have time to treat the pupil as a human being, to show him the problems and a way to solution. How often does it happen to me that at the beginning of the lesson a question comes up which brings up other questions along with it. I try to explain, to demonstrate how it should be done, while others pupils who are there come in with their problems. Before you turn around, the hour is over and the pupil has not had time to play what he had prepared during the week. I am very sympathetic towards a pupil who has not only done his homework obediently, but who has concerned himself with all the thorny problems. He has a right to question this "one lesson a week" system, which hardly gives the teacher time to teach his student, let alone influence and enlighten him.

My ideal is for the teacher to watch the student during practice. Where would the comparison to painting lie? How and where would it be possible to carry over the art of teaching painting to music? The teacher could work with his students in the same building; in this way students could always have their teachers as "ears" and the teacher could go from room to room, correcting pupils while they are practicing. This would be Utopia! Not only because of the question of room.

Candidly, teachers are not always inclined to lend their ears to their pupils for any longer than thirty, forty, or sixty minutes. A significant question remains - whose answer is hardly in the affirmative: how intensively or meaningfully do the teachers themselves practice?

As I have said above, the lesson for the most part goes as follows: from one lesson to the next the student must complete a certain amount of work: perhaps a scale, an

etude, and a section of some piece. If the student is diligent he will practice his lesson, that is, he will repeat what he will have to play during the lesson numerous times, so that he can play the scale, etude, and piece fairly cleanly and up to tempo.

The teacher is satisfied, corrects a wrong note here and there. Possibly in the piece he will suggest a ritardando at some point (that may not even belong there), at another point he may speak about poetry (without being able to explain how poetical feelings can be translated into reality on an instrument), and the student gets a new assignment for next week, which he practices just as faithfully.

Thus the lessons go throughout the year until the student reaches a point where he can play fairly cleanly and quickly, attain a beautiful tone (it is to be hoped), and gain mastery over the cello repertoire or at least be acquainted with it.

An untalented or lazy pupil practices little, gets stuck in his lesson, the teacher scolds, the pupil needs two weeks for a lesson instead of one, and reaches that final point mentioned earlier after a much longer period of study, perhaps even never.

I have played cello for thirty years. My experiences with my own teachers and reports given me by many of my pupils about the lessons they had had until then, have convinced me that with certain positive and negative exceptions, in general, the lesson proceeds as described above.

Thoughts on technique and interpretation

Musical life attains its height in the great talents and in the few rare geniuses, **but is sustained by the less talented, "the middle class and the masses."** Therefore, it is **necessary to change the way of playing of the masses.** As a sign of poor teaching and of difficulties common to all, most of the mistakes - those that are most fundamental - are committed in smaller or larger proportion by all players.

There is the instrumentalist who, when he sees dots over notes, forgets the music and its contents and concerns himself solely with playing the notes short. Yet there are dozens of different ways of interpreting such [a] symbol, and the performer must discern from the character of the piece which method the composer may have preferred.

There can be differences of opinion about how to interpret a dot, not however about the fact that a symbol can be presented in different ways, and one must be chosen. In contrast, there are those who do not even see the symbols.

In any physical activity, an individual's achievement is heightened the more his muscles are used to advantage and the more comfortable he feels. This generally acknowledged theory has not yet made its way into cello lessons. As calmly and well balanced as a cellist may sit with his cello, the moment he starts to play, a change takes place in his body; suddenly his head sits lopsided on his shoulders, one shoulder is pulled up, the

elbow is stretched out in a pointed angle, and the wrist of his right hand becomes stiff, like a board, or his hand dangles about as if it were drunk and the left hand assumes a position that causes one to ask how it is possible even to strike a note, to vibrate, to move from one position to the next.

Talent

As in driving a car, so much has to be done at one time that it seems impossible that it could ever be done mechanically, without deliberating about each movement beforehand.

What is talent? Desire to make sounds? Desire to create something beautiful? Vanity? A longing for something inexpressible? The fingers? The powers of concentration?

Talent is composed of many talents and is dependent on fate. One likes serious music, another likes lighter music; one likes classical, the other modern. Speaking of the purely physical aspects, one may have a better left hand, the other a better right; one may have faster fingers, yet many have difficulties with trills; staccato and spiccato are also accomplished differently by each player. The greater the talent the greater the number of these qualifications the performer will be able to accumulate. Even perfect pitch does not predestine one for music.

The really important factors are a feeling for form, perseverance and patience, thoroughness and lust for discovery. Many are destined to become musicians even when they are still too small to have anything to say about it themselves. It is often said of the great ones that they are involved in a one-sided and unrequited love.

Personality

A composition is written, conceived, and, except for those experts who can read music, it is dead, does not exist, if it is not reproduced by a musician. The situation would be very simple if a machine could do this work; then a way would have been found over the centuries to pass on to the listener the composer's intention to a hair. Instead we have humans, who act as mediators; and since no two people are alike, the reproduction of the music depends on the respective performers.

In the beginning, the composer was also the player; it was, more or less, one profession. Then came a separation, and gradually the role of mere reproduction became all the more important. Since composer and reproducer are no longer the same person and since the composers whom one is interpreting have been dead for centuries, the reproducer has become independent and autonomous.

In my opinion the relationship has been disarranged to such a degree that the performer has become less the mediator between composer and listener and more the handler of raw material, who gives it its final form. This development was inevitable, for we are dealing with a human being, whose natural impulse is to place his own personality in the foreground. Even Mozart complained that his music was being desecrated, but it cannot

have been as bad then as in the nineteenth century, in which liberalism led to the false admiration of one's personality.

We must make it clear to ourselves that it would do great harm to Beethoven's music if each musician were allowed to maintain the essentiality of his own personality for the shaping and molding of Beethoven.

This arrogant attitude does great damage to both music and public. The personality cannot be excluded, but the musician must try to live up to the composer and not bring the composer down to his level. We must take it for granted that of the two, the composer is the greater. The goal which I consider as the most important for the player is: abandon vanity, and ability, if there is any thought behind it at all, will come forth.

Mechanics, Musicality, Technique - a Tripartite Analysis

Here technique, there musicality - an ancient comparison which is senseless and has done great damage to the perfection of playing. There should be a three-part division: mechanism, musicality, and technique, which when used musically is the mechanism.

It is the mechanism alone that is necessary for the juggler, sharpshooter, or maker of fine instruments; on the other hand a "musical" person - because of his musicality, his knowledge about the music, or his love for music - is still not necessarily an artist.

There are many amateurs who have more sensitivity to music than some artists. There are nonprofessional people who are experts in the field of music. I knew a French general who had the most amazing knowledge of Bach.

If there is no fitting definition for talent, there is also none for an artist. I believe that an artist is a person who has an inexplicable longing for music, who has a knowledge of the music, combined with mastery of the mechanics of his instrument. Each of these components consists of a combination of innumerable items. In the case of music, come the different styles. In the case of man, there is temperament, education, dependence on physical conditions (which only to a certain extent coalesce in the same person, resulting in better or worse players), and even a predilection for specific periods within music.

Much nonsense is expounded because art has been misplaced in the spheres, as if nothing solid or craftsmanlike exists. How wrong this is. The great composers and interpreters were scornful of this view of art. Even a Beethoven had, even as his first works had already come out, continued studying counterpoint, and I myself have seen a manuscript of Beethoven's in which he had written counterpoint studies; and at the end he says, if I remember correctly: it could be done correctly another way as well.

More Interpretation

And now I come to the most important question for the practicing artist: is a piece composed to give the interpreter the opportunity to express himself, or should the interpreter perceive that it is his task to subordinate one's talent and ability to the composer?

An interpretation, because it is performed by a person, can never be impersonal, whether intended or not. To give an example: if one examines a composition as something written in an unintelligible language and considers the interpreter a translator, should he render a literal or a free translation?

In my opinion the player should try to extract from the very incomplete score what the composer could only indicate in his writing. He should place his personality and his ability at the disposal of the composition. **Every intentional emphasis of one's own personality is an offense to the composition, in which only one personality should be expressed intentionally - that of the composer.**