Habits Common to Pianists with Dystonia and Other Involuntary Movements

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Observations over 15 years of 17 pianists with involuntary movements who sought help to play with healthy technique revealed the same incoordinate movements and alignments.

Incoordinate:
- Wrist too straight outside
- Wrist below level of arm and hand

Incoordinate:
- 2nd finger pulling toward thumb

Incoordinate:
- Main knuckles tented
- Usually accompanied by straightened middle knuckles

Incoordinate:
- Thumbs pulling forward (especially when moving to 2 or 1)
- Thumbs pulling or hanging down
- Thumbs pulling back (especially when moving to 4 or 5)

Incoordinate:
- Fingers thrusting into key (aiming past the bottom of the key)
- Long fingers avoiding black key area

Incoordinate:
- Torso back
- Head forward
- Shoulders pulling forward
- Elbows out

Hand shape:
- Wrists 2nd finger

Hand shape:
- Knuckles

Hand shape:
- Thumbs

Finger movement

Posture

Our natural alignment is best for playing!

Fortunately, we carry a model of our own perfect alignment around with us: our hands hanging at rest at our sides. As this gallery of perfect forearms shows, we can look in a mirror to see our own true alignment -- the place of the wrist, knuckles, and thumb when none of it is rigid, but it’s all balanced in perfect alignment. The only thing that’s missing is the toned liveliness that allows movement to occur. The less we mess with our perfect alignment, the better we play!

Definitions

Involuntary movements: Unwanted movements people’s hands make that are out of their control. Fingers can twitch spasmodically from side to side, pull under the palm, snap under the hand, and hands make that are out of their control.

The incoordinate alignments and movements can be changed. When pianists play in their natural alignment with coordinate movements, the involuntary movements reduce or disappear.

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Coordinate:
- Wrist one piece with arm and hand
- Wrist in mid-range of motion:
  - up and down
  - side to side

Coordinate:
- 2nd finger in easy natural shape

Coordinate:
- Main and middle knuckles in their tension-free natural shape

Coordinate:
- Thumbs slightly to side of palm
- No activity (extending or flexing) in thumb nail joint

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Bibliography


