

# **Exploration of Cultivating Children's Musical**

## **Expressiveness in Piano Playing:**

A Musical Case Study on Robert Schumann's Album for the Young Op.68

(No.8 "Wild Rider" & No.16 "First Loss")

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## **Abstract:**

Presenting an expressive musical performance is often considered one of the ultimate goals for musicians. In recent years, studies on musical expression—specifically on its pedagogy—have drawn increasing attention in the music field. However, limited studies have been conducted on the feasibility and necessity of teaching musical expressiveness to children who inherently possess the ability to express themselves. This study aims to discuss the indispensability of cultivating children’s musical expressiveness in music study and provide practical approaches for piano teaching pedagogy.

Keywords: Musical Expression, Piano Pedagogy, Musical Pedagogy for Children, Piano Performance, Western Music, Robert Schumann

## **Introduction**

An expressive performance can convey images, stories, and emotions to the listener. (Juslin, 2013; Elliott, 2005) Over the past three hundred years, music expression has been studied and discussed by different areas' scholars from various perspectives. (Bonds, 2020) In the performance aspect, to achieve expressiveness, musicians need to think from the perspectives of composers, performers, and listeners, and manipulate their instruments to create a unique interpretation (changing timing, timbre, tempo, etc, depending on the music style) that deviates from the norm. (Schubert, 2022) On the pedagogical side, as Juslin (2003) argued, music expressive skills are sometimes ignored in music education because its implicit characteristics are difficult for educators to convey to students.

In recent years, more and more musicians, scholars, and music educators stressed the necessity of acquiring and teaching the knowledge of musical expressiveness during their journeys of music-making. (Karlsson and Juslin, 2008; Bonastre, Muñoz and Timmers, 2017; Brenner, Strand, 2013; Meissner, 2016) Many scholars and educators have already explored the feasibility of

teaching musical expressiveness to students and have created various models and strategies. Nevertheless, most of the studies were only focused on adult students and professional musicians. Studies on teaching musical expressiveness to children are limited, due to the age difference, physical factors, levels of perception, and knowledge acquisition. The musical expressiveness pedagogy for children should be distinguished from that for adult students and advanced players.

This study aims to discuss the importance of cultivating children's musical expressiveness in music study and provide practical approaches for pedagogical purposes in piano teaching. In the following chapters, this study will first review the existing studies on the notion of musical expression. Then it will discuss the significance, possibilities, and benefits of children studying musical expression in piano playing. It will also list and categorize the methods and approaches that musical instructors have suggested and applied in teaching musical expression to children. In the end, the paper will use 2 pieces of Robert Schumann's piano work: Album for the Young Op. 68 (No.8 C No.16) as an example to give a practical model of how to incorporate the listed strategies into a real piano lesson. It is worth mentioning that this study is based on teaching musical expressiveness in the Western music context. The presented pedagogical models will be mostly focused on teaching traditional one-to-one piano lessons. Further studies on teaching children's musical expression in a non-western music context and a wider variety of lesson forms are needed.

## **Decoding the Musical Expressiveness from a Performance View**

As Bonds explained in his article “Expression” which was selected in The Handbook of Western Music and Philosophy, even though musical expression was labeled as important as “the soul of music”, it is still difficult to find a single appropriate explanatory framework for musical expression. (Bonds, 2020) In this section, 3 notions of musical expressiveness that were provided by the past researchers will be introduced. The aim is to find overlapped components between each notion and extract the elements that are suitable for the implementation of achieving expressiveness in piano learning.

From a psychological perspective, Juslin (2003) conceptualized 5 components that can lead to an expressive performance:

1. ***Generative Rules***: “In this line of research, expression is regarded as rule-based transformations of nominal score values that originate in the performer’s cognitive representation of the hierarchical structure.” (Juslin, 2003)

2. ***Emotional expression***: In this component, an expressive performance was produced by a performer who used a large number of acoustic variables in the interpretation to create a performance with a specific emotional expression. (For, example, using slow tempo, soft dynamic, and legato articulation to present a “tender” character)

3. ***Random Variability***: This character is based on the fact that music performance always contains random fluctuations. For example, it is impossible for a musician to play the same piece twice in an identical manner. Even though

most musicians try to minimize the random variations (minimizing error), Juslin (2003) said: “From an aesthetical point of view, random variations contribute to the ‘living’ character of the music – that slight unpredictability that makes each performance absolutely unique.”

4. ***Motion Principle***: This component is created by the assumption that music and motion are closely related to one another. For example, change the tempo according to the nature of the human body’s “biological motion”. (Juslin, 2003; Johansson, 1973)

5. ***Stylistic Unexpectedness***: The last component is created by the performers’s unexpected interpretation which deviates from stylistic expectations.

The second notion of musical expression was concluded by Emery Schubert (2022) in his article “Musical Expression” which was published in The Oxford Handbook of Music Performance, Volume 1. From a performance science perspective, Schubert (2022) organized the expressive performance into 3 components:

1. ***Performance Component***: Schubert indicated that this aspect of musical expression was created by the performers using their instruments, implementing physical actions based on the musical/psychophysical signs. The performance component of musical expression occurs at “the interface between musical instruction execution and the corresponding formation of musical/psychoacoustic information”. (Schubert, 2022) For example, musicians can emphasize a non-chord tone of a melody to highlight the tension of the

music.

Besides following the traditions and styles of music, Schubert also pointed out that to achieve an expressive performance, applying the “modulation” or “deviation” from the norm is necessary. However, both musicians and researchers need to continue studying and conceptualizing what the “norm” really means.

**2. *Affect Component*:** Similar to the second component that Juslin listed in his study, Schubert also highlighted the importance of using emotional expression and musical expression to create an expressive performance. When the audience responds to an expressive performance with an aesthetic outcome and describes the performance as “Powerful, moving, impressive, expressive, etc”, we categorize the expression as musical expression. When the audience describes their feelings by using the words such as “Happy, calm, sad, angry, etc”, the expression can be labeled as an emotional expression. Schubert (2022) also clarified that sometimes the 2 kinds of expressions may mix.

**3. *Knowledge Component*:** The last component that Schubert discussed in her study is “musical expression knowledge”. As Schubert noted in the article: “The knowledge component provides the necessary understandings and instructions for musically expressive actions and outcomes.” (Schubert, 2022) The performers may not be aware of this knowledge, and still execute the outcome through an “intuitive” process. Schubert listed 4 types of knowledge that the performers need to acquire when initiating an expressive performance:

(1) ***Notation***: This refers to the ability to read and decode Western music notation. Since Western music notation sometimes provides limited information about its authentic meaning, having the ability to read, find, and analyze the

music notation becomes essential when creating an expressive performance.

(2) Honing Skills or Skill Acquisition: Having the knowledge and skills to execute an expressive performance is also crucial. Therefore, performers also need to train and improve their playing skills to implement musical knowledge.

(3) Proprioception: This ability allows the performers to perceive, evaluate, and improve their performance by getting feedback by listening to the music produced by themselves. Schubert (2022) proved that “Internal” feedback is highly effective when aiming a musical expressiveness.

(4) Extramusical: The last knowledge component that Schubert listed is the knowledge acquisition that happened outside the music sound world. Extramusical knowledge can be given by verbal instructions from teachers, books related to music-making, and other forms of study or experiences that occur in daily life. Some of the extramusical knowledge can also be acquired from the listener’s feedback. (For example, the feedback from the jury members of an audition)

The last definition of musical expression I will present is the notion that Brenner and Strand (2013) conceptualized through their interviews with 5 music teachers who specialize in teaching children. In their article “A Case Study of Teaching Musical Expression to Young Performers”, Brenner and Strand raised a question to 5 music teachers “How did music teachers define musical expression?” The uniform definitions of musical expression provided by those teachers can be categorized into 3 components:

1. **Technique**: the technical skills give the performers a tool to execute an



expressive performance. “All of the teachers defined expressive technical skills as physical flexibility and connection to the instrument.” (Brenner and Strand, 2013)

2. ***Interpretation***: this component requires the performers to shape the performance relying on both individual characteristics and the musical ideas conveyed by composers from different genres.

3. ***Creativity***: “The teachers defined creative as personal decision-making through the use of imagination and/or personality, a process that involved risk-taking and imagination.” (Brenner and Strand, 2013)

Even though the above 3 types of notions of musical expression all vary in some perspectives. We can still find the overlapped components that intertwined with each other. Below are the overlapped parts of the cores of musical expression listed in the previous 3 studies.

1. ***Musical and Extramusical Knowledge and Skills Acquisition***:

The 1st component of Juslin’s notion of musical expression: “General Rules” indicates that the performers have to understand the rules of the score-based music to “convey the musical structure to listeners as clearly as possible.” (Juslin, 2003)

Schubert’s 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> components: “Performance and Knowledge” argued that the ability and awareness to read music notation and master their instruments are significant factors for expressive performance.

The 1st and 2nd components that Brenner and Strand listed: “Technique and Interpretation” also emphasized the importance of improving technical skills

and enriching musical knowledge.

## **2. *The Incorporation of Emotion in Performance***

Both 2<sup>nd</sup> components of Juslin's and Schubert's notions of musical expression stressed the significance of using emotion as a strategy to achieve an expressive performance.

## **3. *Individuality and Creativity (Deviation from the norm)***

While Juslin's opinion on "Random Variability" can be a good example of how the inevitability of individual difference can contribute to expressive performance, another component "stylistic unexpectedness" he conceptualized aligns closely with the perspective of "creativity" that Brenner and Strand listed in their study.

Although there is no single descriptive notion that can conceptualize the "Musical Expression" in a comprehensive way. Reviewing different studies on the definition of musical expression and searching for the overlapped perspectives serves as an effective tool to initiate a practical study on how to implement and teach musical expression. The rest of the paper on the importance, feasibility, and practical demonstration of teaching musical expression all focuses on these 3 extracted notions.

## **The importance of teaching musical expression**

Why teaching musical expression is so important? To answer this question, opinions made by music educators, musicians, and researchers are valuable. The first viewpoint is provided by Burton Kaplan who is the professor of violin and viola at Manhattan School of Music and New York University. In his article “Musical Expression Motivates” (2003), he included an e-mail that he received from a 45-year-old professional musician:

*“...have done a lot of contemporary stuff recently. It all went GREAT—knew what I wanted to do with pieces, was convincing, had successful performances, like that. And I realized recently that I am able to approach this type of repertoire relatively ‘shackle-free.’ Meaning that when I am doing standard rep, I feel terribly inhibited by trying to do ‘what is correct.’ How do I get from worrying about whether something is correct, to doing what am able to do with contemporary works, which is ‘Here it is! This is what I have to say.’”*

Kaplan used this e-mail to provide solid evidence of the struggles that this musician faced from “the traditional and continuing bent of musical pedagogy to leave our feeling and personal interpretation until the technique is incredible. He stressed that music pedagogy should help students improve their expressive skills in music-making rather than perfecting the students’ technique first. (Kaplan, 2003) He also argued that if a performer on stage only has the image of how to play the instrument instead of playing from an emotional image, the audience

may not be able to resonate with the performer.

Another proof of why musical expression can be retrieved from the words described by one of the most well-known pianists in history: Franz Liszt. In the book “Great Pianist on Piano Playing” written by James Francis Cooke (2009, originally published in 1917), Cooke selected multiple interviews from the most influential pianists in the 20th century. In the interview with the Venezuelan pianist Teresa Carreño (1853-1917), Carreño recalled her first encounter with Franz Liszt:

*“He laid his hand upon my head and among other things said: “Little girl, with time you will be one of us. Don’t imitate anyone. Keep yourself true to yourself. Cultivate your individuality and do not follow blindly in the paths of others.”*  
*(Cooke 2009, originally published in 1917 p.109)”*

Researchers have already proven that individuality is an indispensable importance in corroborating the cultivation of musical expression, which requires focusing on exploring individuality in music-making.

Several other interviews that were included in Cooke’s book also demonstrate the value of learning musical expression. For example, English-born pianist of Jewish heritage Harold Bauer (1873-1951) explained: “It is the difference that counts in art, not similarities. Every individual expression is a form of art.” (Cooke, 2009, originally published in 1917, p.67). This emphasis on the importance of creating difference aligns with the components of “individuality and creativity” of musical

expression.

Austrian-born American pianist Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler (1863-1927) deems that when a great artist is performing, instead of mainly focusing on the technical aspects, the artist should also emphasize the composer, feeling the emotion that composers inserted into the music to achieve an expressive and authentic interpretation. (Cooke, 2009, originally published in 1917, p.87) This aspect relates to the emotional component of musical expression that we discussed earlier.

Lithuanian-born American virtuoso pianist Leopold Godoswky (1870-1938) argued that if a pianist doesn't have individuality, the performance will be similar to the one created by a piano-playing machine.

The pioneer provided the psychological notions of music expression, Juslin (2003) held a similar opinion on this issue, he said:

*“It is an expression that makes people go through all sorts of trouble to hear human performances rather than the ‘deadpan’ renditions of computers; It is an expression that makes possible new and insightful interpretations of familiar works: and it is on the basis of expressive features that we prefer one performer rather than another.”*

Empirically, Robert H. Woody (2000) constructed a questionnaire for 46 music students of conservatories in the study “Learning Expressivity in Music Performance: An Exploratory Study” showed that college students who major in

music regard expressiveness as one of the most important aspects of performance.

The above examples collected from different areas further proved the indispensability of learning musical expression in music-making. Now the mystery remains on the feasibility of teaching musical expression to children. If it's possible, what are the strategies and methodologies we can apply in music education?

## **The feasibility of teaching Musical Expression to young children**

The study on teaching musical expression to young performers which was constructed by Brenner and Strand (2013) provided 2 perspectives on the feasibility of teaching musical expression to children. The teachers interviewed by Brenner and Strand suggested that children have more advantages than adults when acquiring expressive skills. The advantages are:

1. *Children have more physical freedom than adults.*

For example, an undergraduate student is less likely to drop old habits (sometimes bad physical habits on playing) than children. The larger physical freedom gave children the ability to acquire the honing skills that can help the execution of musical ideas more efficiently than adults.

2. *Children have stronger abilities for risk-taking.*

Even though teachers believe that adults have a tighter connection with

their emotions, they tend to worry too much about playing things “correctly”, which will reduce the chances of producing an expressive performance.

Children, on the other hand, have fewer concerns with “perfectionism” (since they have less knowledge about what is “correct”, and what is not), and will be more likely to take risks and become more creative in music-making.

In another study on “Exploring Children’s Perception, production, and description of musical expression” constructed by Carlos Xavier Rodriguez, 60 children from kindergarten completed tasks including listening, playing, and discussing the expressive elements of music. The study showed that Children can perceive musical expression as they develop the ability to detect the presence or absence of expression in music. Younger children may struggle to give accurate, detailed verbal responses to music, while older children show better aptitude for verbalizing their awareness and understanding of musical expression.

Furthermore, children's sensitivity to musical expression appears to increase with age, as evidenced by their improved performance in tasks related to perception and description of musical expression. (Rodriguez, 1998)children can learn musical expression. Although the factor of age may influence the effectiveness of knowledge and skill acquisition. The barriers of age and knowledge acquisition may influence the children’s ability to develop an awareness of musical expressiveness. Consequently, finding customized approaches to facilitate children’s learning of musical expression becomes fundamental. In the next

chapter, multiple strategies that can help educators cultivate children's musical expressiveness will be explored.



# **The strategies for cultivating children's musical expressiveness in piano playing**

In recent years, more and more scholars and educators have begun to explore the methodologies and techniques that can improve children's learning of musical expressiveness. It should be noted that there is no single strategy that is more successful than the others since the individual differences between each student. Therefore, this study will provide diversely prevalent and influential methods that educators have suggested and employed specifically in teaching expressiveness in piano playing.

## ***1. The use of Metaphor***

Using metaphor was deemed as one of the most important methods in music pedagogy. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and Helen M. Prior (2014) used a very vivid example to explain why using metaphor is so crucial in music pedagogy:

*“Because music takes so much meaning from its relationship to its causes and the feelings it generates, to say what music is like seems easier and more meaningful than to say what it is. Thus rather than saying “Increasing power in the upper quartile of the frequency spectrum is matched to decreasing inter-*

*onset intervals and increasing sound pressure as the fundamentals of the singer's note-sequence increase in c.p.s., ” which for the past 150 years has been technically possible, we still tend to prefer “the color brightens as the line surges upwards.”*

Metaphorical language allows performers to convey complex expressive features that are challenging to articulate technically, facilitating communication and understanding among musicians. (Leech-Wilkinson, M. Prior, 2014)

It is worth mentioning that there is inevitably a barrier to expecting children to understand all the musical characteristics in the pieces they are studying. This barrier is usually caused by age differences, experience limitations, cultural differences, etc. (For example, when a young student is learning a piece about love or death). In Brenner and Strand's study (2013), the teachers also emphasized the importance and necessity of using metaphor when teaching students about musical structures, historical contexts, and stylistic characteristics. (For example, describing the yearning for love by using the analogy of yearning for an ice cream, or any object that the student is eager to gain.)

In Meissner's study on "Instrumental teacher' instructional strategies for facilitating children's learning of expressive music performance" (2017), using metaphor also serves as the basis for teachers to teach musical expressiveness. Some teachers suggest that describing music as "a conversation": "play as if you are speaking to someone." Others recommend that music educators ask children to "make up a story" to explain and understand the musical meaning behind the score.

*2. Connection to the instrument (knowledge acquisition of piano techniques and the instrument)*

The teachers talk about the connectedness to the instrument in the interviews that were conducted by Brenner and Strand (2013):

*"...the voice would be the easiest instrument on which to be expressive because it is within the body. The farther away the body is from the instrument, the more difficult the connection and the more the teacher must focus upon helping the student become connected."*

Playing piano involves a combination of technical skills, musical interpretation, and various touch controls. Pianists utilize various techniques to

produce sounds, such as touching the keyboards with distinctive levels of weight and speed. (MacRitchie, 2015)

The pianist we mentioned earlier in this paper Harold Bauer also stressed that pianists should be educated about the construction of the instrument. (Cooke, 2009, originally published in 1917, p.72-73) Another influential pianist in history, Ernst Pauer (1826-1905) also highlighted the significance of cultivating the knowledge of the human body in piano teaching. (Cooke, 2009, originally published in 1917, p.198)

Consequently, the acquisition of using different physical techniques to execute the inner ideas should also be considered as an effective method for children to improve their ability in expressive performance. When teaching the knowledge of physical techniques and the knowledge of the instrument to children, it is imperative for educators to take the limitations of children's cognitive abilities into consideration. Choosing appropriate terms according to the ages of the children, using vivid and simple metaphors, and utilizing modern technologies (for example, showing images or videos of how pianos were made, showing examples of how modern piano sounds different from harpsichord) are necessary when teaching children about the technical and physical knowledge.

### *3. Fostering individuality, creativity and improvisation*

As we discussed previously in the definition of musical expression, individuality and “the deviation from the norm” were deemed essential in achieving an expressive performance.

Rodriguez (1998) suggested that to enhance children's musical expression, teachers can focus on creating a supportive environment that encourages exploration and creativity in music. In Meissner’s study (2017), teachers recommended applying improvisational activities in music lessons. Children should be encouraged to improve music with any character or theme.

In the interviews with teachers that Brenner and Strand conducted (2013), even though creativity was seen as one of the most important components of musical expression, it was least addressed during the instruction on music structure. Some teachers believe that allowing students to choose their repertoire which they can feel more resonated with can enhance the students’ emotional connection to the music, which serves as an essential path toward individuality.

Pianist Carreño suggested that to develop individuality, pianists should also culture and nourish their minds by studying nature, history, science, etc. She also highly suggested studying poetry to get inspiration. (Cooke, 2009, originally published in 1917, p.114) From this point of view, educators should

encourage young students to explore the extramusical world to acquire a more comprehensive knowledge of music. Educators can also incorporate the content of extramusical activities into teaching. For example, showing the clips of student's favorite animation, and ask students to improvise a melody according to the scenario.

In addition to the strategies that were listed above, educators also suggested the following methods to help children develop the ability to achieve an expressive performance: *Singing to improve the awareness of the musical structure; Teaching movements of the body; Modeling instructions by the teacher; Selecting repertoire that is suitable for training the musical expression to children(for example, programmatic music) and mental rehearsal.* (Meissner, 2017; Brenner, Strand, 2013)

All of the strategies suggested by educators and professional musicians can serve as pioneering examples for teaching musical expressiveness to young musicians. But how exactly those methods can be used in a one-to-one piano lesson? In the last chapter, by using Schumann's work, a practical example of how to apply those strategies to a real piano lesson by using the 2 piano pieces of Robert Schumann will be presented.

## **Teaching musical expression in a one-to-one piano lesson**

### **(a practical example with music scores)**

The musical examples will be used to demonstrate a model of teaching musical expression in a one-to-one piano lesson are 2 pieces in Robert Schumann's Album for the Young op.68: No.8 "Wilder Reiter" (English translation: "The Wilder Rider" or "The Wild Horseman") and No.16 "Erster Verlust" (English translation: "First Loss"). This album consisted of 43 short pieces and was composed by Robert Schumann in 1848 for his 3 daughters. The whole album was divided into 2 parts. The first part is more suitable for beginners to learn, while the second part, starting from No.19 "Kleine Romanze" ("Little Romance") is noted as "for adults; for more grown-up ones" by Schumann. Schumann's another work "Kinderszenen" ("Scenes from Childhood") Op. 15 is often deemed to be more famous for its characteristics of children's topics. However, the Album for the Young is more suitable to be played and studied by young and beginners. That's the reason why I chose 2 pieces from this album instead of the more famous "Kinderszenen".

The wild rider, or the wild horseman  
**Wilder Reiter.**

Can you make a story or create an image based on the title?

Metaphor

Implied Emotion  
Tempo: Vivace, lively  
(Lebhaft.)

How to play the accent with *sf* effectively (technical skill)

Connection to the Instrument

8.

What is the implied accented beat according to the meter?

Musical Knowledge Acquisition

The importance of rest, what is the meaning of it?

Can you improvise an unique interpretation within the musical style when doing the repeat?

Creativity, Improvisation

**Figure 1.1**, Robert Schumann, “Album für die Jugend, Op.68 No.8”, edited by Alfred Dörffel C Richard Schmidt, Leipzig: C.F. Peters’ Edition(1890)

The first selected piece (see Figure 1.1) is No.8 “Wilder Reiter” (English translation: “The Wilder Rider” or “The Wild Horseman”).

The teaching scenario will focus on the first 2 lines of the music. In Figure 1.1, the information that was enclosed in the “RED” frames should be acknowledged by educators as an effective tool for enhancing musical expressiveness. The



“**BLUE**” colored questions can serve as exemplary references when approaching children’s piano learning. The strategies for improving children’s musical expression are categorized into the “**GREEN**” frames. The strategies which can be used in this work are:

**1. *Using metaphors.***

First, when teaching programmatic music, we should not ignore the importance of the title. The title of this piece is “The Wild Horseman”. To fully understand and resonate with the music, educators can lead the students to imagine the actions and scenarios of riding a horse. If the students never had the opportunity to experience horse riding, using metaphors, such as “imaging when you were riding the carousel” to describe the active motion of the scenarios can help the students feel closer to the musical character.

**2. *Exploring the Emotion***

To maximize the imagination and creativity of the students, we can continue to ask them about their emotional experiences when imagining the mood of riding a horse. For instance, proposing questions such as “How do you think you feel when are you riding a horse? Excited? Horrified? Joyous or Nervous?” Allowing the student to think about the specific character of the music allows them to utilize their imagination and creativity, which are the fundamental components of musical expression.

### ***3. Knowledge of reading notation***

As we mentioned in the first chapter, the knowledge of reading notation is also an important part of learning musical expression in a Western musical context. Helping students to understand deeply the details that composers sometimes hid in their music scores provided various insights to young musicians. For example, in the tradition of Western music, the 6/8 meter usually implies 2 accents. The 1st should be played in a stronger accent, while the 4th should be executed with a less aggressive accent. The implicit accents also implied riding the horse with a stable rhythm pattern. The 8<sup>th</sup> note rests in the left hand and also demonstrates a lively and light motion of the running of the horse.

### ***4. Improvisational repeat***

When encountering a repeat signal in the piece, educators should encourage students to improvise the interpretation within an appropriate range according to the music style when playing the repeated section. For example, when doing the first repeat in this piece, children can experiment with the dynamic (playing in a softer dynamic with a lighter touch), timing (doing rubato when encountering a harmonic tension), or even adding ornaments to specific notes. It is important to note that educators should also provide options and guidance for children to implement improvisational interpretations. The improvisational approaches in the Western music context are complex and varied in many aspects. Therefore, it

is educators' responsibility to guide and instruct students about its implementation and possibilities.

### ***5. Technical skills***

Other strategies including the convey the musical message by learning the scientific approach to playing the instrument. For instance, when teaching students about how to play the accent marked with “sf”, educators should emphasize the need of using the weight of the body to support the playing instead of letting students strike the keyboard. It will also prevent students from injuring themselves by using unscientific techniques.

**Implied Emotion**  
Why Schumann chose this tempo?

**First loss**  
**Erster Verlust.**

Ask the student:  
Can you recall your first loss of something?  
How do you feel about it?

**Not fast**  
**Nicht schnell.**

**Metaphor and Emotion**

16. *fp*

What is special about this dynamic marking?  
How to you execute it in piano?

**Metaphor, Connection to the Instrument, Musical Knowledge**

**Experiment the slowing down**

**A bit slower**  
**Etwas langsamer.**

**Creativity, Improvisation**  
**im Tempo.**

**Metaphor and Emotion**

What's the meaning of this dramatic moment?

**Musical Knowledge, Connection to the Instrument**

7.000

What's the difference between these 2 articulated markings? How can you play them differently?

**Edition Peters.**

**Figure 1.2**, Robert Schumann, “Album für die Jugend, Op.68 No.16”, edited by Alfred Dörrfel C Richard Schmidt, Leipzig: C.F. Peters’ Edition(1890)

The second example (see Figure 1.2) is the No. 16 “First Loss” in the album. This one provides a wider space for educators to cultivate the imagination and individuality of young children. By proposing the question “What is your first loss of something, and how do you feel about it?”, the individual differences of children will lead to numerous different interpretations of the same piece. It will also evoke students’ subtle emotions on the subject of loss, which will contribute to a deeper understanding of the musical character of the piece.

## **Conclusion**

This paper aims to explore the path of developing children’s learning of musical expressiveness in piano playing. By comparing different definitions of musical expression that were conceptualized by researchers from different disciplines, selecting the main strategies and methodologies that are suitable for piano pedagogy: 1. The use of metaphor; 2. The connection to the instrument; 3. Fostering individuality, creativity, and improvisation. A practical demonstration on how to teach musical expression in a one-to-one piano lesson is presented in the study.

It should be pointed out that musical expression is a multi-dimensional concept that can have various meanings depending on different musical styles, cultures, and forms of music. This study only focused on teaching musical

expression to young children in the Western music context. Further study can continue to explore a wider range of musical expressions. For example, how to teach musical expression in the context of the absence of music notation? How to teach musical expression in a non-western music world? Studies on the cultivation of teaching musical expressiveness to children will provide more perspectives on piano pedagogy for children. While helping piano educators explore more various methodologies of teaching, it will also motivate children's learning of music and lead them to find their music language and personality.

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