

More about bridge and crane

I. Generally speaking, the pianistic movements of the Motor Apparatus (MA) are:

- either predominantly horizontal:
 - impulse from the shoulder (when necessary);
 - pushing forwards - opening the arm in the elbow (all the time);
 - pushing forwards - elongation of the fingers (all the time).
- or predominantly vertical:
 - impulse or pressure of the hand from the wrist (when necessary);
 - impulse or pressure of the finger from the metacarpus (when necessary).

II. Let's make two easy tests in order to understand the MA basic actions:

1. BRIDGE

- a. Keep a sheet of paper at the wall with your 2nd finger.
- b. Alternate the 2nd and 3rd fingers as if you were playing **legato**: 2—3—2—3—...

Result: the sheet doesn't move, you maintain a continuous pressure on the wall through the paper and thus make a permanent bridge.

2. CRANE

- a. Start in the same way, i.e. keep a sheet of paper at the wall with your 2nd finger.
- b. Alternate the 2nd and 3rd fingers as if you were playing a very **long portato**: 2—v3—v2—v3—v with very short spaces (v) between the "notes". The sheet mustn't fall down.

Result: if it is done correctly, the sheet will move down very slightly, remaining between your finger and the wall.

III. Conclusions:

- On the piano, this space ("v" from test 2) between the notes is the shortest and the most useful crane - you must keep pushing all the time during playing.
- The only difference between the bridge and the crane are the **vertical components** assisted by shoulder impulses.
 - When making the bridge, you make a contact between the shoulder and the bottom of keyboard.
 - When making the crane, this contact does not exist, but the MA must always be prepared to make the bridge, keeping pushing forward even when none of the keys is pressed down.
- **One of the most frequent pianistic mistakes** is relaxing the horizontal components simultaneously with the vertical ones instead of relaxing the latter ones only.

Question of a student of mine:

"I'm not completely certain I understand what it means to be the pushing all the time."

My answer:

By "pushing", I mean the double action of opening the arm in the elbow and elongating the fingers. This double action is, in fact, more or less horizontal, but you must think it horizontal.

In this way you make a good, solid bridge when you strike a key. But if you are between two notes (crane state), you must keep doing this same "pushing" action in order to be able to make a new bridge immediately. If not, your second bridge will not be solid enough and your sound and technique will suffer.

NOTE:

The pianistic bridge isn't something static or permanent - on the contrary, it appears and disappears sometimes a few times per second.