

NATHAN RICHARDSON AND THE EDITIONS OF THE NEW METHOD FOR THE
PIANOFORTE

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Nathan Richardson and the Editions of

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ABSTRACT

Those studying music during the mid-nineteenth century in the United States began to experience music education through many of the models of pedagogy that are still in use at the present time. The use of a method book for music study was a new concept. A few more serious piano students travelled to Europe to study with the major performing artists of the day. As the number of homes with pianos increased, so did piano method books for home use. Women of the gilded age were encouraged to pursue music, most often for the purpose of playing at home and in salon settings, which gave rise to new methodologies such as Nathan Richardson's *New Method for the Pianoforte*. The intent of this study is to present a careful examination of Richardson's *New Method* and the context in which his method and the revisions appeared.

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CHAPTER 1. THE LIFE OF NATHAN RICHARDSON

Nathan Richardson (1827-1859) was a music publisher, piano teacher, pedagogical writer, newspaper correspondent, and owner of a music store. It was evident he was successful in these ventures and appears to have profited greatly.

He was born to Dr. Nathan Richardson (1781-1837) and his second wife, Elizabeth Alden, (1797-1832) in South Reading, Massachusetts on July 30, 1827. The senior Nathan Richardson was a physician by profession and businessman who promoted a sherry wine bitter as a remedy “in the cure of some diseases.”¹ The business was highly successful and by the 1860s, amounted to \$100,000 annually.²

After losing both of his parents at a young age, Richardson came under the care of his half-brother, Dr. Solon Osmond Richardson,³ and studied piano with both J.C Johnson and George Webb in Boston. During that time, Richardson composed a work for solo piano, the *Camilla Waltz*, published by Oliver Ditson in 1847.

During five years of study in Europe (1847-1852), Richardson studied with noted pianists and teachers Carl Meyer, Ignaz Moscheles, and Alexander Dreyschock. His correspondence with newspapers in Boston and New York provided the reading public information on current musical happenings abroad. In January of 1852, Lowell Mason (1792-1872), a respected Boston musician and educator, wrote that Richardson, “left Paris a few days since for London, whence, after a few months, he will return to his native country, to commence his music professional

¹ John Adams Vinton, *The Richardson Memorial Comprising a Full History and Genealogy of the Posterity of the Three Brothers, Ezekiel, Samuel, and Thomas Richardson, Who Came from England, and United with Others in the Foundation of Woburn, Massachusetts, in the Year 1641, of John Richardson, of Medfield, 1679, of Amos Richardson, of Boston, 1640, of Edward and William Richardson, of Newbury, 1643, with Notices of Richardsons in England and Elsewhere*, (Portland, Me: Printed for the subscribers by B. Thurston & Co, 1876), 449, <http://www.archive.org/details/richardsonmemori00byuvint> (accessed July 17, 2012).

² Ibid.

³ Nathan Richardson Papers (MS Am 2567). Houghton Library, Harvard University.

career...He has all this time been under the best masters that could be found, and he has turned his special attention to the art of teaching.”⁴ Richardson returned to the United States in August of 1852.

Two months after his return from Europe, Richardson began advertising in *Dwight's Journal of Music* as a professor of piano. After less than a year back in the United States, he returned to Europe in February of 1853 to gain endorsements for his new teaching method, *The Modern School for the Piano-forte*. Also in 1853, he published a short, twenty-three page booklet titled *Inklings for the Lovers of Music*. In the booklet Richardson states that it was intended to serve as an advertisement for his *Modern School for the Piano-forte*, but also included his thoughts on piano pedagogy and piano performance. Thus, this work furnishes insight into his philosophy of teaching.

Also in 1853, Richardson opened his music store, The Musical Exchange, and started a publishing firm. In Susan Potter's study on nineteenth-century piano methods, she explains that:

Richardson's music store...was established with great festivity during the last week of October. It was "fitted and furnished in an expensive manner through the generosity of an older brother, who had plenty of money." It must have been a beautiful store, indeed, as Dwight described it as "by far the most elegant and tasteful establishment of the kind in this country.”⁵

The store was located at 282 Washington Street in Boston. In 1854, he published another pedagogical work, *The Elements of Music at Sight*. In 1856 he combined his publishing firm with that of George D. Russell. The new business, now called Russell & Richardson, then moved to a larger space.

⁴ Lowell Mason, *Musical Letters from Abroad Including Detailed Accounts of the Birmingham, Norwich, and Dusseldorf Musical Festivals of 1852*, (New York: Mason, 1854), 158-159, <http://ebooks.library.ualberta.ca/local/musicallettersfr00masouoft> (accessed July 17, 2012).

⁵ Susan Marie Potter, "The Piano Method in Mid-Nineteenth Century America: A Study of Method Writers and Their Works Published in the United States" (D.M.A. diss., Temple University, 1994). In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304124872?accountid=6766>. (accessed July 16, 2012), 113.

During several more trips to Europe, Richardson contracted with composers to publish their works and purchased European publications for resale in his store. Richardson also published works by American composers including William Mason (1829-1908) and George Frederick Root (1820-1895). While in Europe, he subscribed to the Bach *Gesellschaft*, and on his return to the United States donated it to the Boston Public Library.⁶

On October 27, 1856, Richardson married Mary Ann Moore of Warren, Massachusetts. In the same year he contracted tuberculosis, at which point his health began to decline.

By 1858, he had completed a second piano method, *The New Method for the Pianoforte*, which would become his most enduring pedagogical work. The Oliver Ditson Company first published it in 1859. Soon after Richardson secured its publication with Ditson, he and his wife left for Paris seeking a cure for his tuberculosis. Nathan Richardson died at the age of thirty-two in Paris on November 19, 1859. Mary Richardson accompanied her husband's body back to the United States in December of 1859, and he was buried in Warren, Massachusetts.⁷ The posthumous popularity of his newly published method is apparent in that it "generated a great financial reward, providing Richardson's widow with more than \$100,000 in royalties by 1889."⁸

⁶ Ibid., 113-114.

⁷ Nathan Richardson Papers.

⁸ Potter, 121.

CHAPTER 2. THE PLACE OF THE PIANO IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY
AMERICAN CULTURE

The success of Nathan Richardson's *New Method* was in part due to the musical climate in the United States during the middle to late half of the nineteenth century. Owning a piano was a sign of social status as well as a way to provide nightly amusement. "In 1869, when Harriet Beecher Stowe and Catherine Beecher published a floor plan for an ideal home, only two pieces of furniture were included: a sofa and a piano."⁹ This concept of the piano as a piece of furniture likely was strengthened when advertisements began including pianos in their illustrations of a complete and happy home. In an 1869 publication of a song titled "Song of the Sewing Machine," the front cover "shows mamma at the machine, left, turning her face affectionately toward papa, center who is fondling one of two little children; at the right stands a large square piano to complete the necessary elements of the domestic scene."¹⁰

Appearance and status were of great importance during this era; a woman who was an accomplished musician elevated her position in society. In Richardson's *New Method* there are glimpses of the importance of appearance, such as: "The elegant deportment of polished life must always be transferred to the art; and the rule applies, generally, 'that every movement which conduces really and essentially to our better playing is allowed;' here, however, we must avoid all that is unnecessary and superfluous."¹¹ Richardson states that "There is no higher satisfaction than in being able to distinguish one's self before a large company, and in receiving

⁹Potter, 3.

¹⁰ Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos a Social History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1990), 561.

¹¹ Nathan Richardson and W. S. B. Mathews, *Richardson's New Method for the Pianoforte ... With Careful Revision, Annotations, Many New Amusements, and an Appendix of the Celebrated Pianoforte Technics of Dr. William Mason* (Boston: Oliver Ditson Co., 1894), 79.

an honorable acknowledgment of one's diligence and talent."¹² The illustration before the title page of Richardson's *New Method* shows a woman in full Victorian dress playing Beethoven's *Pathetique Sonata* with a copy of Richardson's method partially seen behind Beethoven's score.

Figure 1. Woman at the piano, taken from Richardson's *New Method*, before the title page.



Perhaps this illustration was a subtle hint that Richardson's method would teach the pupil to perform standard works and provide the education that a woman needed to be accepted in society. According to Arthur Loesser,

Music in the home, centering around the piano, is cozy. The home's very warmth is partly derived from the variety of lowly objects in it – each carrying familiar and personal associations. The sentimental attachment that the piano could arouse was bound up with the things with which it lived: the parlor games, the embroidery, the sewing machine, and even the medicines and the corsets with which it shared the house.¹³

¹² Ibid, 273.

¹³ Ibid, 563.

Music lessons were available mostly to upper middle-class girls and talented boys who showed potential. Often the most serious of these students then sought training in Europe to complete their studies. Most nineteenth-century middle and upper-class women in the United States remained at home and were expected to be accomplished musical amateurs. Music was considered a necessary part of a young woman's education.

Some historians believe that the major motivation for 19th-century families to send their daughters to school was to strengthen their chances on the marriage market. When the first public high school for girls opened in Boston, the *American Journal of Education* wrote that the school should give "women such an education as shall make them fit wives for well educated men, and enable them to exert a salutary influence upon the rising generation."¹⁴

It was in this general social climate that Richardson wrote his various pedagogical works.

Another factor in the growing popularity of the piano and piano study was the affordability of the instrument. The number of imported pianos began to decline by the year 1820 because of the increased number of American manufacturers.¹⁵ Denes Agay notes:

Mid-19th century America saw major advances in piano manufacturing. The Chickering had developed the one-piece cast-iron frame, and the Steinways gradually increased the overall tension capacity of the frame beyond all previous limits, creating an instrument of great strength and loveliness of sound. Pianos were produced in all shapes and sizes: grands, squares, uprights. Sales soared. In 1851, 9,000 pianos were built in the U.S.; within a decade the number grew to 25,000, and by the end of the century to 1,000,000, with more pianos than bathtubs in American homes. It was only natural that homegrown instruction books should also begin to proliferate.¹⁶

Music publishing was a growing business during the mid-nineteenth century. The middle and upper classes wanted music that they could play and enjoy in their homes. The first piano

¹⁴ Stephanie Kermes, "To Make Them Fit Wives For Well Educated Men? 19th-Century Education of Boston Girls," Boston Historical Society, [http://www.bostonhistory.org/pdf/Kermes %20article_final.pdf](http://www.bostonhistory.org/pdf/Kermes%20article_final.pdf) (accessed July 16, 2012).

¹⁵ Potter, 2.

¹⁶ Denes Agay, "An Early American Treasure Trove," *Clavier* 29, No. 8 (October 1990): 22 and 24.

method published in the United States was the *New Assistant for the Piano-Forte or Harpsichord* in 1796 written by the Englishman Francis Linley. It was not until the 1850s that it was common for native-born pianists to write and publish piano methods. Three of the best known American writers and their methods from this time were George Willig Jr., *The Juvenile Instructor*, 1835; Nathan Richardson's two methods, 1850s; and William Mason, *A Method for the Pianoforte*¹⁷, 1867. From the years 1820-1870 over 150 method and etude books were published in the United States to fulfill the demand of the increasing number of pianists.¹⁸

The piano method books viewed in this study emphasize technique and the ability to develop finger dexterity at various levels. According to Sheryl Mueller's dissertation on piano pedagogy in the United States during the nineteenth century, "Piano methods which were intended for the sole purpose of developing technical facility flooded the American market during the nineteenth century. Whether proficiency with scales, arpeggios or chords...all considered the development of a brilliant technique as the end result."¹⁹

Even though Richardson emphasized that his method was balanced with musicality, technique and enjoyment, the focus on technical display is apparent. In a section on five finger exercises Richardson states,

A thorough knowledge of the notes and their places, &c, avails us but very little, if at the same time the fingers do not begin to develop that degree of flexibility which is requisite for striking the keys....The daily practice of Five Finger Exercises with untiring diligence....will thus speedily acquire flexibility, independence, and volubility, which are

¹⁷ William Mason and E. S. Hoadly, *A Method for the Piano-forte* (Boston: O. Ditson, 1867).

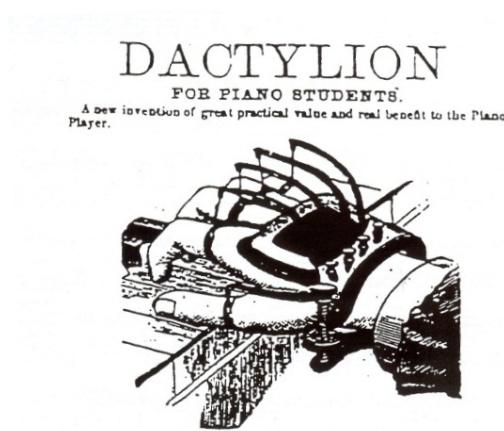
¹⁸ Potter, 10.

¹⁹ Sheryl Maureen Peterson Mueller, "Concepts of Nineteenth-Century Piano Pedagogy in the United States" (PhD diss., University of Colorado, 1995). In ProQuest Dissertation and Theses, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304193213?accountid=6766>. (accessed July 16, 2012): 95.

so indispensable to a good performer on the Piano-forte. You not only gain rapid execution and equality of touch... but you gain great strength in the fingers, which is very essential. It is impossible to play the Piano-forte well, with weak, stiff, untractable fingers.²⁰

The importance placed on developing a solid technique also led to the marketing of mechanical devices for the sole purpose of strengthening a pianist's fingers. One such device was the Dactylion, an invention of Henri Herz (1803-1888), a piano virtuoso well known to American audiences. It consisted of a glove with rings and springs that resisted finger action used in playing the piano, evidently with the intent of finger strengthening.

Figure 2. Dactylion, from Sheryl Maureen Peterson Mueller's dissertation, 105.



Mechanical devices such as the Dactylion were a commercial aspect of American methodology through the beginning of the twentieth century.

²⁰ Nathan Richardson, *Richardson's New Method for the Piano-forte: An Improvement Upon All Other Instruction Books in Progressive Arrangement, Adaptation and Simplicity: Founded Upon a New and Original Plan, and Illustrated by a Series of Plates, Showing the Position of the Hands and Fingers: To Which is Added Rudiments of Harmony and Thorough-bass, Czerny's Letters to Young Ladies on the Art of Playing the Piano, Schumann's Rules for Young Musicians, Rules and Remarks by Bach, Mozart, Clementi, Cramer, Hummel, Moschelles, Kalkbrunner, Czerny, and Thalberg* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1859) 27.

One of the most popular devices in use towards the end of the nineteenth century was the so called “dumb piano” or more specifically, the Virgil Practice Clavier. The device featured a standard keyboard with adjustable key weights. Each key had a clicking noise when the key was engaged and when it was released. “To achieve...the correct legato touch in piano performance, the player would have to coordinate his attacks and releases, so that the click of the key released would sound simultaneously with the click of the next key attack.”²¹

Figure 3. Virgil Practice Clavier, from the website, <http://practisingthepiano.com/?p=752>



Perhaps the most extreme American experiment in the development of piano technique was the severing of tendons connecting the fourth and fifth fingers in the hand to develop more dexterity. The thought was that a pianist would gain a larger hand span and the fourth finger would gain more independence and strength. In the United States, Dr. William S. Forbes was the

²¹ Robert Westfall Groves, “The Life and Works of W. S. B. Mathews (1837-1912)” (PhD diss., The University of Iowa, 1981). In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/303157372?accountid=6766> (accessed July 16, 2012): 104.

leading doctor to perform this surgery. In an article written by himself for the Boston Medical Journal in 1884, Dr. Forbes explains the surgery:

A narrow, blunt pointed bistoury placed in the incision, with its handle depressed and its blade flatwise, was carried beneath the accessory slip and down as far as just a little above and between the knuckles of the ring and middle fingers, where its blunt point could be felt beneath the skin. The bistoury was now turned with its sharp edge towards the skin, and the middle finger strongly flexed and the ring finger extended, so as to make tense the accessory slip, when with a gentle sawing motion, the slip was at once severed.²²

He also speaks about the results: “A young man whose left ring finger was very much restricted, and the tense accessory tendons could be distinctly felt. At the young man’s desire I operated at once, and on dividing the tendons of the fingers he could lift this finger from the plane of the hand an inch higher than before the surgery.”²³ While this may have worked for a short period of time, it must have compromised the structure of the hand because by the 1890s talk of this surgery largely disappeared.

All of these nineteenth-century economic and social aspects, the education of women, social status, manufacturing of pianos, piano publishing, and the desire for technique provided fertile ground for publications like Richardson’s *New Method*. Thus, Richardson’s methods and the growing popularity of method books in general provided much needed home instruction books.

Richardson explained his thoughts on the need for his method books in his *Inklings for the Lovers of Music*. In addition to advertising his piano method, it also provided his thoughts on

²² William S. Forbes, “The Liberating of the Ring Finger in Musicians by Dividing the Accessory Tendons of the Extensor Communis Digitorum Muscle,” Boston Medical and Surgical Journal CXI, No. 26 (Dec. 1884): 601, <http://books.google.com/books?id=pcYEAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA601&lpg=PA601&dq=liberating+the+ring+finger+surgery&source=bl&ots=qk656hMFAe&sig=QArg61ZTtj024GEgQKWHbVYin0U&hl=en&sa=X&ei=OlMEUJb6HIPQ2wXpi9CWCw&ved=0CDsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=liberating%20the%20ring%20finger%20surgery&f=false> (accessed July 16, 2012).

²³ Ibid.

piano pedagogy and piano performance. He writes in the beginning of this work, “The object of this publication is to draw the attention of all lovers of Music to the importance of Musical Education....[the piano] is more generally used, throughout the entire world, than any other...a house is not fashionably furnished without one.”²⁴

He then enumerates his reasons why the current European methods were not sufficient, stating: “In order to excel in any art or profession, what should be the proper course to pursue? Can one acquire a proficiency through the study of the works of a single author? I am convinced that it would be impossible....To become a thorough musician, it is necessary to study the works of different composers.”²⁵ He lists whom he believed to be the world’s four leading pianists and teachers: Franz Liszt; Sigismond Thalberg; Adolf von Henselt; and Alexander Dreyschock. Specific reasons why Richardson felt none of these pianists were adequate teachers were then presented in the following paragraphs. Liszt, he stated: “cannot impart to others that which he knows not where nor how he gained himself.”²⁶ This statement was written in reference to the natural talent of Liszt and his apparent technical ease. Richardson felt that this natural talent did not allow Liszt to empathize with and understand the common student. He continued by stating that a student of Thalberg “would be made thoroughly acquainted with his music and his style, but what would the student know about Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Henselt, Dreyschock, and others?”²⁷

He then concludes that there is a need for a combination of several styles and different composers to give students a well-balanced music education. His two pianoforte methods that

²⁴ Nathan Richardson, *Inklings for the Lovers of Music* (Boston: Published by the author, 1853).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

followed this publication demonstrated his feelings about a more inclusive methodology by including works by a number of different composers such as Henri Bertini, Ferdinand Beyer, Muzio Clementi, Carl Czerny, Alexander Dreyschock, Stephen Heller, Franz Hüntten, Felix Mendelssohn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Sigismond Thalberg.

CHAPTER 3. THE ORIGINAL EDITION OF THE NEW METHOD FOR THE PIANOFORTE

1859 saw the first printing of *Richardson's new method for the piano-forte: an improvement upon all other instruction books in progressive arrangement, adaptation and simplicity : founded upon a new and original plan, and illustrated by a series of plates, showing the position of the hands and fingers : to which is added rudiments of harmony and thorough-bass, Czerny's Letters to young ladies on the art of playing the piano, Schumann's Rules for young musicians, rules and remarks by Bach, Mozart, Clementi, Cramer, Hummel, Moschelles[sic], Kalkbrunner, Czerny, and Thalberg*. This full title clearly indicates the combinations of influences contained in this method.

Richardson's preface contains insights into his pedagogical philosophy.

I have endeavored to take the straightest possible path to guide the pupil progressively, step by step, from the first rudiments of music, to the highest department of the art of Piano-forte playing. I have avoided all unnecessary exercises, lengthy studies and uninteresting pieces, which are so often uselessly employed to enlarge and fill up a book....Most of the Exercises are modeled into the shape of melodies, to interest the pupil and make practice a source of pleasure, instead of discouraging him with dry examples and indifferent selections.²⁸

It features “amusements” for the student to play between exercises. These amusements become progressively more difficult and culminate with a somewhat virtuosic “Grand Finale” at the conclusion.

Richardson's *New Method* was intended to prepare students to play the standard repertoire of the day, but it also serves as an early example of method books geared toward the recreational pianist. Concurrent books, such as William Mason's *Touch and Technic for Artistic*

²⁸ Richardson *New Method*, Preface.

Piano Playing (1889), tended to focus solely on technique and left it to the teacher, and possibly the student, to provide standard music to practice. Mason's focus on technical practice likely was aimed toward developing virtuosic playing rather than recreational playing. Richardson's wish to include standard literature is evident on the opening page of the method, with its image of a young lady seated at an ornate piano with a copy of Beethoven's *Pathétique Sonata* open on the music rack with Richardson's method at its side.

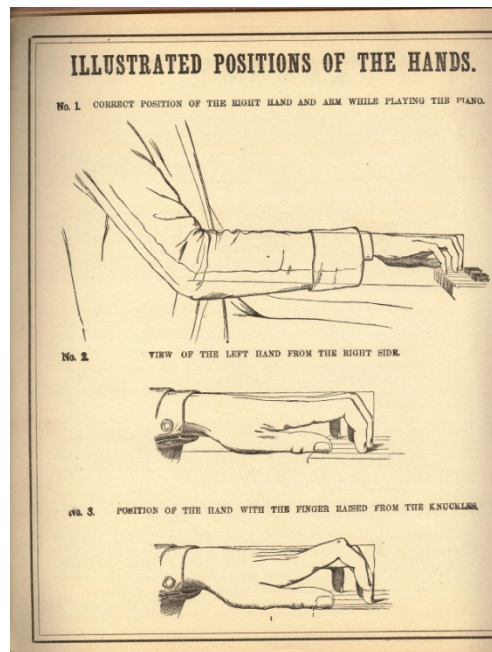
Although Richardson's method was meant to prepare a student to play standard literature in a sound technical manner, he felt his inclusion of short amusements helped the student to remain interested. The two to four hours a day of practice²⁹ recommended by Richardson would now not be as tedious, with melodic and pleasing musical examples to help fill the practice time. Some of these "amusements" were written by Richardson himself, while others were by a number of different composers. However, curiously, Richardson does not give credit to the composer when the piece is presented. The pieces were simply numbered in order of appearance in the method, and the only credit given to the original composer is the introductory list of composers in the preface and in the title. Richardson explains that: "As it was found expedient to abridge and otherwise alter some of the selections, in order to make them conform to the plan of the work, it is not thought advisable to affix the authors' names to their respective composition, which would, in a manner, be making them responsible for the alterations."³⁰ However, some of the more well-known amusements are readily identifiable, such as Mendelssohn's "Spring Song," Op. 62 No. 6, and a movement of a Clementi sonatina.

²⁹ Ibid., 22.

³⁰ Ibid., Preface.

Richardson demonstrates hand position with four pages of Louis Kohler's illustrations of hand position, which Richardson points out in the preface.

Figure 4. Louis Kohler illustration of hand position, taken from Richardson's *New Method*, 1.



Following is a twenty-page introduction explaining the “rudiments of music,” much like what one would see in an introduction of a modern music theory textbook. Richardson states, “It is these first principles...that the pupil should have perfectly established in the memory.”³¹ In just the first two pages of these rudiments, Richardson introduces the musical alphabet, the staff, grand staff, notes on the staff, ledger lines, the treble clef and bass clef, measures, and bar lines. Following the initial introduction of these first basic concepts, the seven note lengths occurring in the method, from sixty-fourth notes to whole notes, are identified in a single chart. (see figure 5)

³¹ Ibid, 7.

a graceful...position when sitting at the Pianoforte. The seat which is used ought to be of such a height, so that the elbows...may be a very little lower than the upper surface of the keys,³² an elbow position with which today's teachers might disagree.

Figure 6. Key signature chart, taken from Richardson's *New Method*, 11.

THE SIGNATURES OF THE TWELVE MAJOR KEYS.

THE SIGNATURES OF THE TWELVE MINOR KEYS.

Figure 7. The keyboard and corresponding notes on the staff, taken from Richardson's *New Method*, 21.

THE KEY-BOARD.

Piano-fortes are now made with a key-board extending all the way from 6 to 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ octaves. We give below a drawing of a Piano-forte key-board, containing seven octaves. The notes and names below the key-board correspond with the keys and names above.

NAMES OF ALL THE BLACK KEYS, FLATS AND SHARPS.

C# or D \flat .	D# or E \flat .	F# or G \flat .	G# or A \flat .	A# or B \flat .	D \flat .	D# or E \flat .	F# or G \flat .	G# or A \flat .	A# or B \flat .	C# or D \flat .	D# or E \flat .	F# or G \flat .	G# or A \flat .	A# or B \flat .	C# or D \flat .	D# or E \flat .	F# or G \flat .	G# or A \flat .	A# or B \flat .	C# or D \flat .	D# or E \flat .	F# or G \flat .	G# or A \flat .	A# or B \flat .
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Names of the Letters and Keys in the Treble.

Names of the Letters and Keys in the Bass.

³² Ibid.

Facial appearance at the piano is also given importance. “Particular pains should be taken to control the muscles of the face, so as to avoid making a disagreeable appearance. It is not merely that an awkward position is disagreeable and ridiculous, but is also impedes...the development of a free and elegant style of playing.”³³

Again, as in the rudiments section, the importance of note names and their location on the keyboard is stressed through a four step process when practicing.

First. When you look at a note, name it aloud, and then strike the key which belongs to it. Secondly. When you strike at hazard any white key on the treble side of the keyboard, you should name it aloud, and look directly for the note belonging to it. Thirdly. After having struck any white key at hazard, you should describe aloud, in words, on what line, or in what space, the note belonging to it is written. Fourthly. You must often play slowly through, the easiest pieces, note by note, and with great attention, naming each note as you proceed.³⁴

Two systems of fingering are explained before the student begins. The fingering system known as the “American fingering,” labels the thumb as “x” with the remaining fingers numbered 1-2-3-4. The second system is referred to as the “foreign” or European system, which uses the standard numbering 1-2-3-4-5. Richardson’s *New Method* was published separately with both the American and European fingering systems, allowing the student or teacher to decide upon which one to follow. (see figure 8 and 9)

The first time the student is asked to play a short piece on the piano is on page twenty-three. The student begins playing “hands together” in exercise seven. The hands play in a parallel fashion both rhythmically and melodically from exercise seven through sixteen. All the

³³ Ibid.

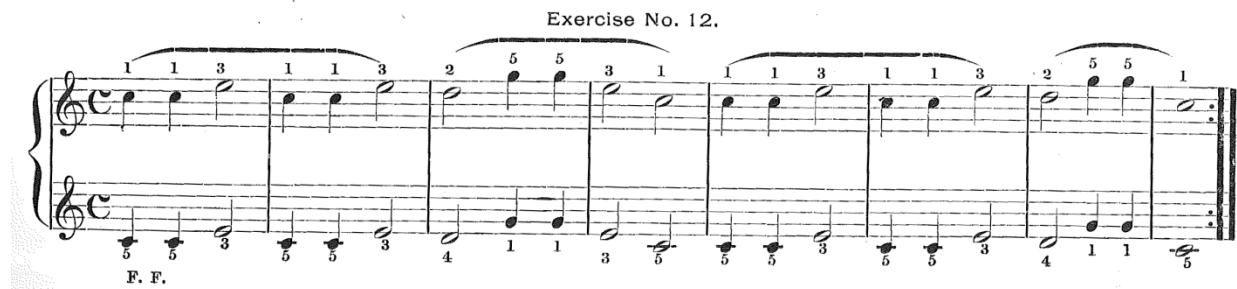
³⁴ Ibid., 22.

early level exercises are written in the treble clef in both hands. It is not until the first amusement on page twenty-six that the bass clef is introduced in the left hand.

Figure 8. American Fingering, taken from Richardson's *New Method*, 25.



Figure 9. Foreign Fingering, taken from Richardson's *New Method* revised, 31.



At the same point that the bass clef is introduced in the first amusement, the student begins studying pieces that use independent rhythms between the hands. (see figure 10) The second and third amusements require the hands to move outside a five-note position for the first time.

The student begins working on specific five finger exercises on page twenty-seven, which continue to appear in different arrangements every few pages through page eighty-six. Of these exercises, Richardson states: “The daily practice of Five Finger Exercises with untiring diligence, and the greatest attention is...most earnestly recommended. You will thus speedily

acquire flexibility, independence, and volubility, which are so indispensable to a good performer on the Piano-forte.”³⁵ Richardson also sets up a specific practice regimen: “Practise with each hand separately at first, and very slowly. Raise the fingers high, and strike with a firm blow. Avoid having two fingers of the same hand, down at the same time....play each exercise at least, twenty-five times, before proceeding to the next.”³⁶ After this point, the method focuses more on scales and arpeggios rather than five-finger exercises.

Figure 10. First Amusement, taken from Richardson’s *New Method*, 26.



After two more amusements and another set of exercises, a third type of piece is introduced to the pupil, titled “Study.” Each of the twenty-eight studies included in the method presents a specific technical or musical problem. This first study is intended to help the left hand develop a steady tempo while playing Alberti bass. Prior to playing the piece, Richardson provides the following instruction: “The following is a simple study intended more particularly

³⁵ Ibid., 27.

³⁶ Ibid.

for exercising the left hand. It has but little variation, but requires a steady movement, in strict legato style.”³⁷

Figure 11. First Study, taken from Richardson’s *New Method*, 32.



Following this first study is an amusement introducing the concept of changing clefs within a piece of music. Richardson introduces this amusement with the following:

It will be observed in the following piece, that the clefs change several times....this is to accustom you to changes early, that at a later period you may give your attention to difficulties without any great annoyance. (It is my object to lead you step by step, and so progressively that you will soon be astonished at your own performance. The pupil must faithfully and thoroughly learn every page.”³⁸

Interspersed throughout the method are paragraphs and phrases reminding the student how to practice and perform, such as: “Never begin a piece quicker than you can with certainty go through it to the very end,”³⁹ and, “one of the worst faults is carrying the ritardando and

³⁷ Ibid., 32.

³⁸ Ibid., 33.

³⁹ Ibid., 60.

accelerando to excess, so that we are often left in doubt for some time whether the piece is written in triple or common time. This produces nearly the same effect as if some one were addressing us in a strange and unintelligible language.”⁴⁰ A third example:

When, therefore, one begins a new and somewhat difficult piece, the first hours must be devoted to deciphering the notes strictly and correctly in slow time. The fingering to be employed must also be determined, and a general insight gained into the whole....After this the whole piece must be played over quietly and composedly....single passages of great difficulty may be practised apart....now the time comes when we must also learn to play it with beauty and elegance.⁴¹

Richardson follows the section on trill performance with a paragraph about expression.

Expression, feeling, and sensibility, are the soul of music....the most difficult part of all is always to observe the proper medium at each mark of expression; for there is great diversity in the shades and degrees of forte, piano, legato, staccato, accelerando, and ritardando. The utmost fortissimo should never degenerate into mere hammering and thumping, or into maltreating the instrument. For the same reasons, the most gentle pianissimo ought never to become indistinct and unintelligible.⁴²

Throughout the method, each new technical concept typically is demonstrated with an exercise, study, or scale followed by an amusement. For example, scales in octaves are introduced on page sixty-six and in the next two amusements, the right hand is entirely in octaves. (see figures 20 and 21)

On page fifty-one, instruction on the “Grand Practice of the Scales” begins. A full page of explanatory remarks includes: “The scales are the most necessary of all, not only for beginners, but even for pupils who are much advanced; and, indeed, the most expert players do,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 71.

⁴¹ Ibid., 141.

⁴² Ibid., 174.

and constantly must, have recourse to the scales and practice them.”⁴³ Proficiency in scales was expected to be mastered before the conclusion of the book. Richardson explains why he thought scales were necessary in a musical sense as well: “In every piece, whether written today or one hundred years ago, they are the principal means by which every passage and every melody is formed. You will now easily imagine what an advantage a player has who is perfectly acquainted, in all the keys.”⁴⁴

Figure 12. Twentieth Amusement, taken from Richardson’s *New Method*, 66.



Richardson’s explanations of scale playing are quite detailed, such as the practice of passing the thumb under the fingers and the fingers over the thumb:

⁴³ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

This passing of the thumb and fingers, even in the most rapid passages, must be effected in a manner so natural, equal, and unlabored, that the hearer shall not be able to distinguish the smallest interruption or inequality....and is only possible when neither the arm nor the hand make the slightest movement upwards or sideways.⁴⁵

Figure 13. Twenty-first Amusement, taken from Richardson's *New Method*, 67.



He also believed that scales should be played, "First, with the right hand only, and then with both hands."⁴⁶ It is curious that Richardson does not indicate why playing with the left hand separately is not required.

Correct fingering of the scales was emphasized: "Correct fingering is a very important part of piano-forte playing, and one which costs every pupil a good deal of labor. Now, the scales contain all the principal rules of fingering, and in themselves are sufficient, in nearly every case, to show the pupil the right fingering."⁴⁷ Each scale was to be practiced in a specific order of varied executions as shown in his chart. (see figure 14)

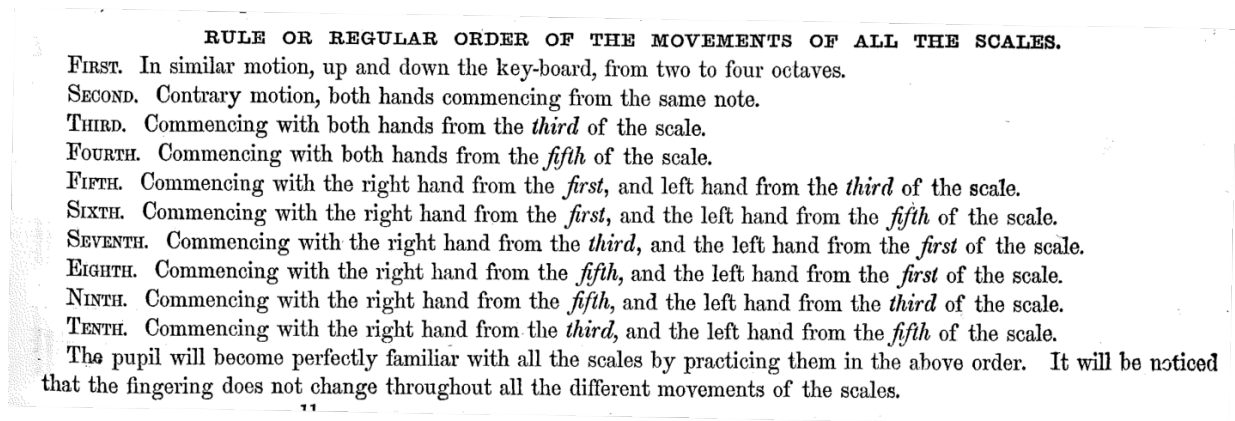
⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Scales are introduced first in major then in the parallel minor key, moving from C major clockwise through the circle of fifths up to F# Major. As with the introduction of key signatures, scales do not exceed six sharps or five flats, although all are covered enharmonically.

Figure 14. Rules for scale practice, taken from Richardson's *New Method*, 81.



The first flat key he introduces is F major. Richardson explains his reasoning for the ordering of scales by the following:

In most other instruction books, the Scales of F# Major and Minor; are followed by the higher flat scales commencing with Db (Signature of five flats,) and ending with the Scale of F natural, but I consider this Scale easier than the Scales with more flats than five. I commence with the most simple Scales first, and arrive at the more difficult ones as they come in turn.⁴⁸

Richardson presents scales in a concise carefully organized manner, providing the student the opportunity to learn scales efficiently. The introduction of each scale typically is followed by an amusement or exercise in the same key. The chromatic scale is introduced on page 147 in similar motion, contrary motion, major and minor thirds, major and minor sixths, and broken

⁴⁸ Ibid., 115. This is a curious statement in that F# major and Db major (six flats) play identically.

thirds. The importance that Richardson placed on scales in his method is emphasized again by his remarks at the conclusion of the scales section: “The end of all the simple scales has now been reached; but it becomes a duty to charge the pupil not to neglect the continual practice, with equal or even greater zeal, in the finger exercises, and scales in all the keys.”⁴⁹

The next technical concepts presented are arpeggios in root, first, second, and third inversions. Arpeggios are introduced in major and parallel minor through “common chords in all keys.”⁵⁰ Chords are written out for all twelve black and white keys in what he terms first position (root position), second position (first inversion), and third position (second inversion.) All are marked with the same fingerings that should be used in the arpeggios. These fingerings reflect the same fingering approaches used in today’s methodology.

Figure 15. Common chords, taken from Richardson’s *New Method*, 151.

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The score is organized into six columns, each representing a different chord. Above the treble staff, the columns are labeled: 'First Position with Octave.', 'Second Position.', and 'Third Position.' for each of the six chords. The chords are: 'Common Chord of C Major.', 'Chord of C Minor.', 'Chord of G Major.', 'Chord of G Minor.', 'Chord of D Major.', and 'Chord of D Minor.'. Below the bass staff, the columns are labeled '1st.', '2nd.', and '3rd.' for each chord, indicating the first, second, and third positions (root, first inversion, and second inversion) for each chord. The notation includes notes, rests, and fingerings (numbers 1-4) for each note. Some notes are marked with an 'x' to indicate they should not be played.

Directly below the chart of all the common chords and their inversions is another chart explaining the “construction of the Arpeggio from Chords.”⁵¹ (see figure 16) The following two pages contain examples of two octave arpeggios written out with fingerings, in root, first and second inversions.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 150.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 151.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Figure 16. Arpeggios, taken from Richardson’s *New Method*, 151.

EXAMPLES OF ARPEGGIOS.

N. B. It will be seen by the above, the construction of the Arpeggio from Chords.

Five pages after the triadic arpeggios, Richardson begins “arpeggios on the dominant seventh chords”⁵² in all positions, root through third inversion. Arpeggios on the diminished chords begin on page 165 and follow the same progression of showing the chords and then building the two octave arpeggios from the chords. This is the extent of the description on how arpeggios are constructed and fingered. Much like the scales, pupils are taught the basic knowledge they need to play the arpeggios, but Richardson does not include suggestions for proper execution. However, as in his introduction to scale playing, many of the fingering examples are accompanied by a relevant study or amusement.

Richardson breaks from his discussion of scales and arpeggios by devoting four pages to the art of playing embellishments. Following are his brief introductory statements:

The Graces – namely, the Shake, the Turn, the Appoggiatura, &c. – are the flowers of music; and the clear, correct, and delicate execution of them, embellishes and exalts every melody and every passage. But when they are played stiff, hard, or unintelligibly, they may be compared rather to blots of ink or spots of dirt. The Shake is peculiarly important; and to a pianist, its elegant, equal, and rapid execution is as indispensable as a smooth and sparkling execution of the scales. In the right hand, at least, it ought to be

⁵² Ibid., 156.

played equally well with all the fingers; and the equality of the Shake can only be attained by lifting up both fingers to the *same height*, and striking the keys with equal force.⁵³

Interestingly, this description provides students a view of the function of embellishments, but with only one specific instruction on the technique of playing them-namely the shake. Again, this seems to leave the teacher to explain, or the pupils to figure out on their own, proficient embellishment performance.

Richardson returns to scale playing on page 176, but this time has students play them in double thirds in similar and contrary motion.

Figure 17. Scale in double thirds, taken from Richardson's *New Method*, 176.



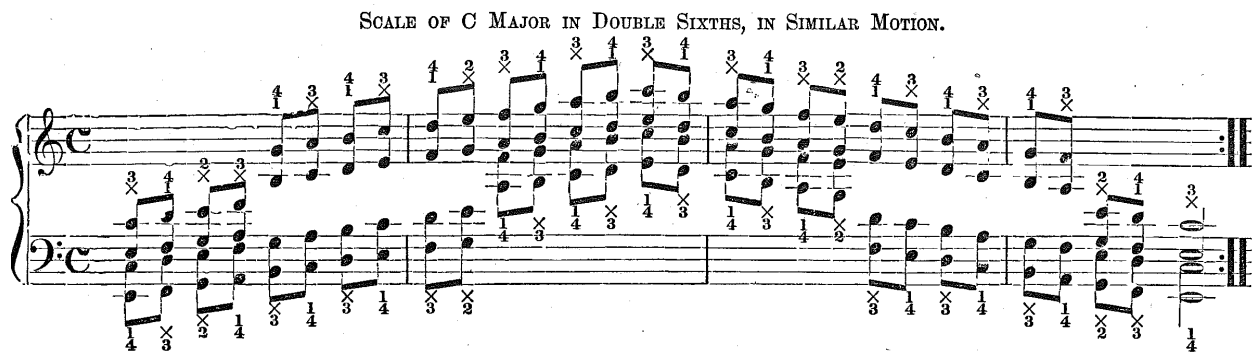
As before, double-third scales are introduced in the major and then parallel minor. Over the next several pages are the major and minor double-third scales in similar and contrary motion, as well as the chromatic scale in double-minor thirds. Scattered throughout this section are three relevant amusements. On page 195, Richardson introduces double-sixth scales. (see figure 18) As before, Richardson provides no explanation on the execution of scales in sixths. The ordering

⁵³ Ibid, 171.

of these scales is the same as the double thirds scales and the use of illustrative amusements is similar to those used in double thirds playing.

As the end of the *New Method* nears, Richardson focuses on subjects of a more general nature such as how “to play before others”⁵⁴ and “the selection of the most suitable compositions.”⁵⁵ According to Richardson, such advice prepares the student to be able to perform, choose repertoire, and have eventual independence following completion of the method book.

Figure 18. Scale in double sixths, taken from Richardson’s *New Method*, 195.



Richardson explains some aspects of public performance in the following:

Every difficult piece becomes doubly difficult when we play it before others....When playing before others, a performer should especially endeavor to execute *well-studied* pieces....One should study and commit to memory a good number of little, easy, but tasteful pieces; so that, on such occasions, they may be played by heart; for it appears rather childish to be obliged to draw back, with an excuse such as “I cannot play anything without the notes.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid., 193.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 216.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 193.

Richardson gives his thoughts on the importance of post-method choice of repertoire in the following:

1st. That we ought always to proceed from the more easy to the more difficult as to execution. 2d. That as far as possible, we should make ourselves acquainted with the works of all the great composers, and not by any means tie ourselves down to any favorite authors. 3d. That by degrees, we should also thoroughly learn the classical and truly valuable works of the earlier composers. Every distinguished composer requires to be played in a style peculiar to himself...Lastly. There are pieces which include all these different styles, and which therefore, compel the player to adopt corresponding alterations of manner in his performance.⁵⁷

Richardson reaffirms the importance he places on his use of varied styles. His insistence on the student's need to be well rounded in all styles of music is one of the factors that he feels distinguishes his method from those of concurrent methods. So that the student would understand more thoroughly his steps on how to choose suitable pieces to play, Richardson gives several examples showing how the style of Hummel is different from Beethoven's, and that the style of Bach and Handel called for different techniques from the music of Richardson's day.

Compared to modern teaching methodology, Richardson's *New Method* moves at a rapid pace, demonstrated by the virtuosic demands of the final piece, titled, "Grand Finale." (see figure 19)

Richardson concludes with a final page of explanations concerning "extemporaneous playing," or what musicians today would call improvisation.

Music in some measure is a species of language, by which may be expressed those passions and feelings with which the mind is...affected and we are able to play...which has neither been written down before, nor previously prepared or studied....To learn to extemporize, one should commence connecting together easy chords, short melodies,

⁵⁷ Ibid., 216.

passages, scale, chords in arpeggios, or what is much better, leave it to the fingers to effect this connection at their will and pleasure.⁵⁸

Figure 19. Grand Finale, taken from Richardson's *New Method*, 224.

224 Richardson's New Method for the Piano-forte.

GRANDE FINALE.

PRESTO ALLEGRAEMENTE.

TUTTA LA FORZA.

Sempre.

ff

ff Un Poco Ritenuto.

f Staccato.

Diminu.

p

Sf

Sf

Sf

Sf

Sf

Ritard. Sf

The first appendix presents an eleven-page overview of the rudiments of harmony and thorough-bass. This overview includes what Richardson explains as: “What chords are possible

⁵⁸ Ibid, 226.

in music; and...how these chords must succeed each other in regular progression, so as to give to each melody the necessary harmonic ground-work, or accompaniment.”⁵⁹

It is interesting to note that, unlike modern piano methods which introduce them early, Richardson’s method waits to explain intervals until this appendix. The section concludes with two pages demonstrating chord progressions in all the keys (up to six sharps and five flats). Each example begins in either C major or A minor and modulates to a different key. As an example, see figure twenty-one:

Figure 20. Modulation, taken from Richardson’s *New Method*, 237.

MODULATIONS IN ALL THE KEYS.

The image shows a musical score titled "MODULATIONS IN ALL THE KEYS." It consists of four systems of music, each representing a modulation from C Major to a different key. Each system has a treble clef and a bass clef. The first system is labeled "Modulation from C Major to G Major." and "To D Major." The second system is labeled "To A Major." and "To E Major." The music is written in a simple, chordal style, with notes and rests clearly visible on the staves.

The second appendix is a four-page dictionary of musical terms followed by four pages of all the major and minor two octave scales, in both treble and bass clefs. This reiteration of scales again emphasizes the importance he placed on their study.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 227.

CHAPTER 4. THE 1894 REVISIONS OF THE NEW METHOD FOR THE PIANOFORTE

The popularity of Richardson's method continued throughout the century. After several additional reprints in the 1860s-80s, the Ditson Publishing Company made several revisions to the original method and published it as the revised edition in 1894. The author of the revisions is listed on the title page as W.S.B. Mathews (1837-1912). His changes to the original edition included "annotations, many new amusements, and an appendix of the celebrated pianoforte technics of Dr. William Mason."⁶⁰ W.S.B. Mathews was a prolific American writer and editor about piano teaching for numerous music periodicals and publications during the nineteenth century. Several key changes in the revised edition made this work more accessible to the general public, and the availability of this revised edition continued into the twentieth century.

A major change was the division of the method into eight grades, making it easier to track the progress of the student. The first grade begins with students playing their first exercises on page twenty-eight after they have gone through all the introductory material that corresponds to the preliminary section in the original edition.

The keyboard is introduced on the first page of instruction instead of page twenty-one as in the original edition. In the theoretical material all key signatures are now included, unlike the original that only included key signatures up to six sharps and five flats. The key signature chart also includes how the tonic, subdominant and dominant chords are spelled in each key. (see figure 21) Much of the material covered in this introductory section is the same as the original with slight alterations to the order and explanation of concepts. Generally, the introductory concepts are explained in greater detail, thus creating more text than in the original edition. For

⁶⁰ Richardson and Mathews, 1.

example, there is an added section of text that addresses “Rudiment of Musical Intelligence,”⁶¹ that includes statements such as:

When you analyze any piece you will find it to consist of two kinds of ideas; a Melody or Tune, and an Accompaniment, which may be more or less elaborate....The smallest unit in melody is what is called a Motive; viz., a musical idea adopted for a pattern, and repeated at a higher or lower pitch until a melody is completed thereby.⁶²

References are made to specific examples or amusements in the method that illustrate musically the information presented in the section.

Figure 21. Revised key signature chart, taken from the revised edition of the *New Method*, 13.

SIGNATURES.	TONIC.	SCALE TONES.								TONIC CHORD.			SUBDOMINANT CHORD.			DOMINANT CHORD.		
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	I	III	V	IV	VI	VIII	V	VII	IX
Natural	C	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	C	E	G	F	A	C	G	B	D
1 sharp	G	G	A	B	C	D	E	F \sharp	G	G	B	D	C	E	G	D	F \sharp	A
2 sharps	D	D	E	F \sharp	G	A	B	C \sharp	D	D	F \sharp	A	G	B	D	A	C \sharp	E
3 sharps	A	A	B	C \sharp	D	E	F \sharp	G \sharp	A	A	C \sharp	E	D	F \sharp	A	E	G \sharp	B
4 sharps	E	E	F \sharp	G \sharp	A	B	C \sharp	D \sharp	E	E	G \sharp	B	A	C \sharp	E	B	D \sharp	F \sharp
5 sharps	B	B	C \sharp	D \sharp	E	F \sharp	G \sharp	A \sharp	B	B	D \sharp	F \sharp	E	G \sharp	B	F \sharp	A \sharp	C \sharp
6 sharps	F \sharp	F \sharp	G \sharp	A \sharp	B	C \sharp	D \sharp	E \sharp	F \sharp	F \sharp	A \sharp	C \sharp	B	D \sharp	F \sharp	C \sharp	E \sharp	G \sharp
7 sharps	C \sharp	C \sharp	D \sharp	E \sharp	F \sharp	G \sharp	A \sharp	B \sharp	C \sharp	C \sharp	E \sharp	G \sharp	F \sharp	A \sharp	C \sharp	G \sharp	B \sharp	D \sharp

SIGNATURES.	TONIC.	SCALE TONES.								TONIC CHORD.			SUBDOMINANT CHORD.			DOMINANT CHORD.		
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	I	III	V	IV	VI	VIII	V	VII	IX
1 flat	F	F	G	A	B \flat	C	D	E	F	F	A	C	B \flat	D	F	C	E	G
2 flats	B \flat	B \flat	C	D	E \flat	F	G	A	B \flat	B \flat	D	F	E \flat	G	B \flat	F	A	C
3 flats	E \flat	E \flat	F	G	A \flat	B \flat	C	D	E \flat	E \flat	G	B \flat	A \flat	C	E \flat	B \flat	D	F
4 flats	A \flat	A \flat	B \flat	C	D \flat	E \flat	F	G	A \flat	A \flat	C	E \flat	D \flat	F	A \flat	E \flat	G	B \flat
5 flats	D \flat	D \flat	E \flat	F	G \flat	A \flat	B \flat	C	D \flat	D \flat	F	A \flat	G \flat	B \flat	D \flat	A \flat	C	E \flat
6 flats	G \flat	G \flat	A \flat	B \flat	C \flat	D \flat	E \flat	F	G \flat	G \flat	B \flat	D \flat	C \flat	E \flat	G \flat	D \flat	F	A \flat
7 flats	C \flat	C \flat	D \flat	E \flat	F \flat	G \flat	A \flat	B \flat	C \flat	C \flat	E \flat	G \flat	F \flat	A \flat	C \flat	G \flat	B \flat	D \flat

The overall appearance of the method was changed in the revised edition. Some examples are enlarged, there are additional interpretive markings, and there is a clearer

⁶¹ Ibid., 19.

⁶² Ibid.

delineation between text and music. For example, the third amusement in the original edition appears like this:

Figure 22. Original Third Amusement, taken from Richardson's *New Method*, 27.

THIRD AMUSEMENT.

Give each note its full time, and do not hurry. Count three in each measure.

The revised edition separates the text from the music and adds in slurs.

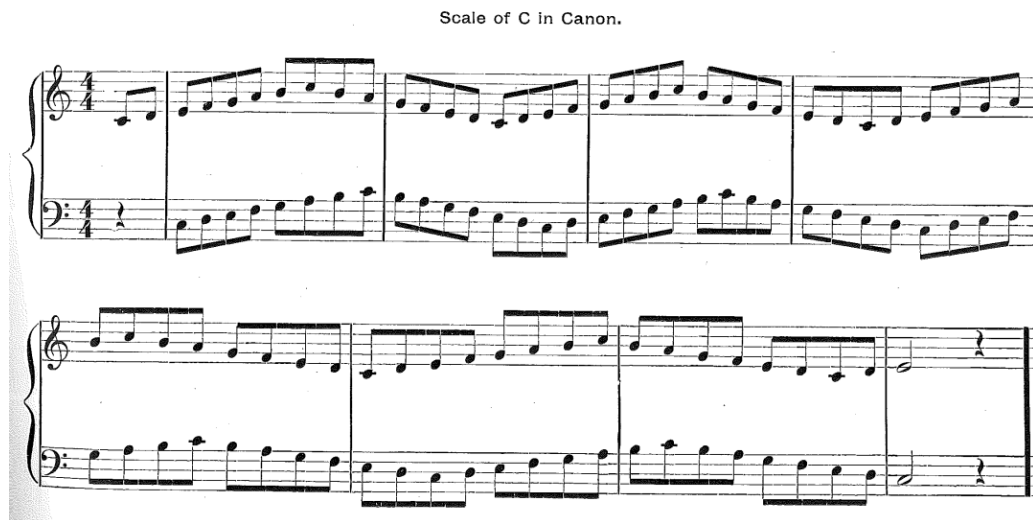
Figure 23. Revised Third Amusement, taken from the revised edition of the *New Method*, 33.

THIRD AMUSEMENT.

Give each note its full time, and do not hurry. Count three in each measure.

The order of the introduction of scales and arpeggios is slightly changed, and the introduction to full octave scales is much more thorough. In the original, scales and their fingerings were explained by talking about the thumb under. Mathews retains the section concerning thumb under, and he adds an additional explanation on the height of the wrist and positioning of the fourth finger. “The key to the correct fingering of the Scales is found in the placing of the fourth finger, which, being used but once in every octave, brings everything else into its right place if this be used upon the proper degree....Right hand fourth finger on Seven; left hand fourth finger on Two.”⁶³ A technique for scale fingering also new to the revised edition is the playing of scales in canon. “One of the surest and quickest ways of establishing the correct fingering of the scales is to practice them in canon form.”⁶⁴

Figure 24. Scale in canon, taken from the revised edition of the *New Method*, 65.



⁶³ Ibid., 50.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 65. It would be interesting for Mathews to have explained how playing in canon form first can better establish correct fingering of scales.

While the scales do appear in the same order as in the original edition, root position arpeggios are added after the initial teaching of the C major two-octave scale. As in the original edition, only scales up to six sharps and five flats are included, but Mathews adds additional studies, exercises, and amusements after some of the scales. An example of additional detail Mathews provides for students is the introduction of the c minor scale. In the original edition, the scale is written out in all the forms with accidentals and fingerings with no suggestions on execution. In the revised edition there is a concise but complete explanation of how to form the minor scales. “The easiest way of forming the minor scale upon the keyboard is to derive it from the major of the same tonic by flattening the third and sixth degrees.”⁶⁵ All minor scales in both the original and revised edition use the melodic scale ascending and the harmonic scale descending. In the revised edition the need also to raise the sixth in an ascending minor scale is explained, “Inasmuch as this gives rise to the progression of an augmented second...the major sixth is sometimes used in ascending for the sake of greater smoothness.”⁶⁶

The introduction of the arpeggios in both editions is similar. However, Mathews provides additional explanations about fingering and technique. “It is not expected that the pupil will master all these Arpeggios at this point. He will, however, easily master the chords themselves, to the extent of being able to play every chord in all positions with the correct fingering, as called for by the teacher.”⁶⁷ The explanation also suggests that the student learn the “Mason forms”⁶⁸ in the appendix of the revised edition to help learn the arpeggios.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 81.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 192.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Scales in double thirds, unlike the original edition, are introduced with a thorough explanation of the fingering process.

They have a regular system of fingering, the key to which is the place in every octave where the fifth and the third fingers are used together. All the other degrees are played by alternating the two pairs of strong fingers....Ascending, the right hand has perfect legato at the first step, and the second step; but when the fifth finger is on G and it is necessary to bring the first and third fingers on the next degree, the change is made by releasing the lower finger and swinging on the fifth, as on a pivot, holding the G until the third finger has passed over and taken its place on A.⁶⁹

Scale fingerings also are included with each double third scale.

Scales in double sixths also are given a more thorough explanation: “Scales in double sixths are much more difficult than those in double thirds, owing to the hand being so much more extended. They are important, however, from their influence in strengthening the weak fingers.”⁷⁰ Mathews then lays out six steps:

1. Practice with each hand separately.
2. Observe that the third finger is used but once in each octave....
3. The legato cannot be preserved in all cases. In ascending the upper parts are legato throughout....In descending the lower parts are legato throughout....
4. Great care must be taken to give the third and fourth fingers as independent and reliable a movement as possible.
5. These scales in double sixths are not to be practiced all at one, but one scale at a time in connection with other matter.
6. Besides playing them with the hands separately, they must be played with both hands together, and also in contrary motion.⁷¹

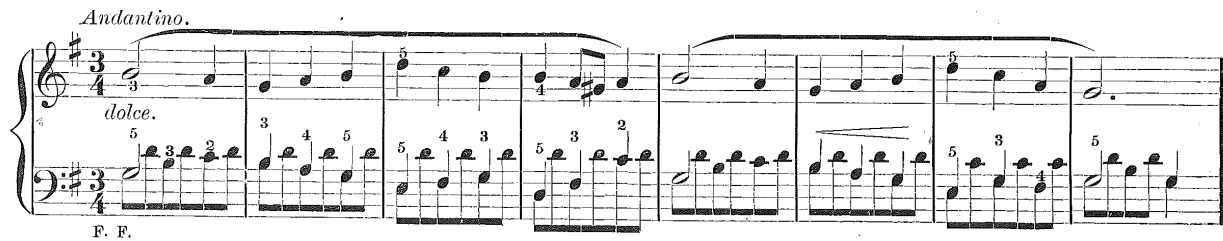
Mathews felt that his additional remarks concerning some pieces and between sections increased the practicality of the *New Method*. For example, the twenty-second amusement serves as one example of a work that was original to the 1859 method, but received added remarks by Mathews.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 225.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 246.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Figure 25. Twenty-second Amusement, taken from the revised edition of the *New Method*, 74.



In the first edition Richardson states that in the twenty-second amusement: “the only difficulty in playing the following piece is in the left hand; that is to give each note its full duration of time, and at the same time not give them more time than they require.”⁷² However, in the revision, Mathews states:

The principal difficulty of the following amusement is in the legato, which must be very smooth and flowing in the right hand, and the proper crescendos and diminuendos for expressing the melody, like a beautiful song.... There is also a melodic idea in the bass, indicated, by the notes with two stems. These must also be played legato with each other, and this secondary melody have its proper effect. In order to accomplish this it will be necessary to practice the left hand alone and very carefully at that.⁷³

Another example of clarification can be seen with the twenty-sixth amusement. In the original edition, this amusement is accompanied by the brief subtitle: “A choral[sic] with a variation.”⁷⁴ However, in the revised edition, amusement twenty-six is provided two paragraphs on learning and performing the piece. (see figure 26) The revised edition states: “One of the most important points in the Choral is that of a refined and song-like quality of tone with the

⁷² Richardson, 67.

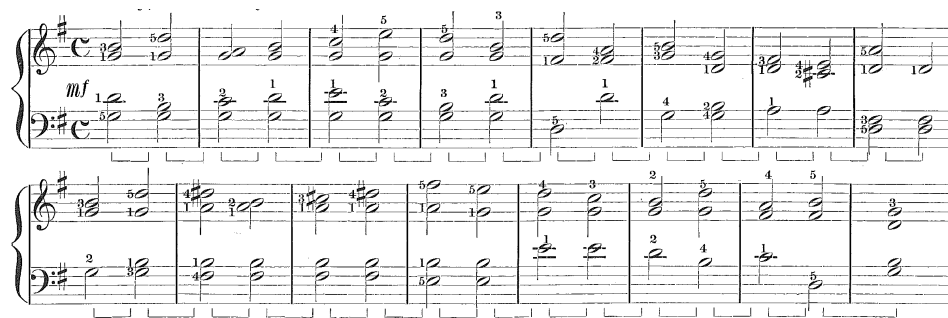
⁷³ Richardson and Mathews, 74.

⁷⁴ Richardson, 83.

melody a trifle stronger than the other parts. This can be accomplished by directing the attention to the melody.”⁷⁵

The original edition does not introduce proper use of the damper pedal. The revised edition touches upon damper pedal usage, but only in a couple of instances. Mathews briefly addresses pedaling with two amusements by discussing the need for overlapping or connected pedal. According to Mathews, pedaling a homophonic chorale (see figure 27) is taught thus: “The interval while the hands are raised preparatory to touching the next chord must be bridged over by means of the pedal.”⁷⁶ Mathews describes amusement fifty-one, an arrangement of Stephen Foster’s, “The Old Folks at Home,” as a pedal study.

Figure 26. Twenty-sixth Amusement, taken from the revised edition of the *New Method*, 91.



The arrangement is comparatively long with the melody alternating between the hands throughout. Mathews explains the pedal with the following:

In the following study the melody tones are prolonged in most instances by the use of the pedal, which must be taken just after the melody tone is sounded, and released just as the following melody tone is about to be sounded. Its office, therefore, is that of bridging

⁷⁵ Richardson and Mathews, 91.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

over, where without it there would be a break in the melody owing to the hand being engaged in removing to its next position.⁷⁷

In many instances the revised edition includes pedal markings, but with no additional instruction on the technique of pedaling. Even so, the revised edition gives small glimpses into the mechanics of pedaling that the original edition did not provide.

Figure 27. “The Old Folks at Home,” taken from the revised edition of the *New Method*, 195.



The number of amusements in the revised edition grew to sixty-seven from fifty-four in the original edition. The additional amusements may indicate that Mathews was directing his revised edition more to recreational pianists than to the budding concert performer. The added amusements may indicate the musical tastes of the growing number of recreational pianists. A number of the added amusements were based on well-known melodies with colorful arpeggiated arrangements. For example, the Stephen Foster tune “Old Folks at Home” is a fairly simple tune. (see figure 28) However, the arrangement of the melody is replete with runs and arpeggios. (see figure 29) Another example is the well-known melody, “Listen to the Mocking Bird.” (see

⁷⁷ Ibid., 195.

figure 30) The arrangement in the revised edition starts with a fairly simple introduction of the tune. (see figure 31)

Figure 28. “The Old Folks at Home” tune.



Figure 29. Arrangement of “The Old Folks at Home,” taken from the revised edition of the *New Method*, 196.



The arrangement features a number of falling arpeggiated figures in both hands, similar in fashion to the arrangement “The Old Folks at Home.” The falling arpeggio approach is quite common to many of the amusements added by Mathews. (see figure 32)

These added amusements sometimes are accompanied by useful remarks about the importance of judicious practice approaches. For example, together with the thirtieth amusement, an arrangement of the hymn “Nearer My God to Thee,” Mathews suggests a six-step process on learning this piece. His comments begin with his feelings about the importance of

this arrangement: “Experience shows that melodies well known to the player; especially melodies which he is in the habit of hearing sung, lead sooner to an expressive method of touching the keys than those which are but poorly known to him.”⁷⁸

Figure 30. “Listen to the Mockingbird” tune.



Figure 31. Arrangement of “Listen to the Mockingbird,” taken from the revised edition of the *New Method*, 114.



This is followed by his description of the six steps:

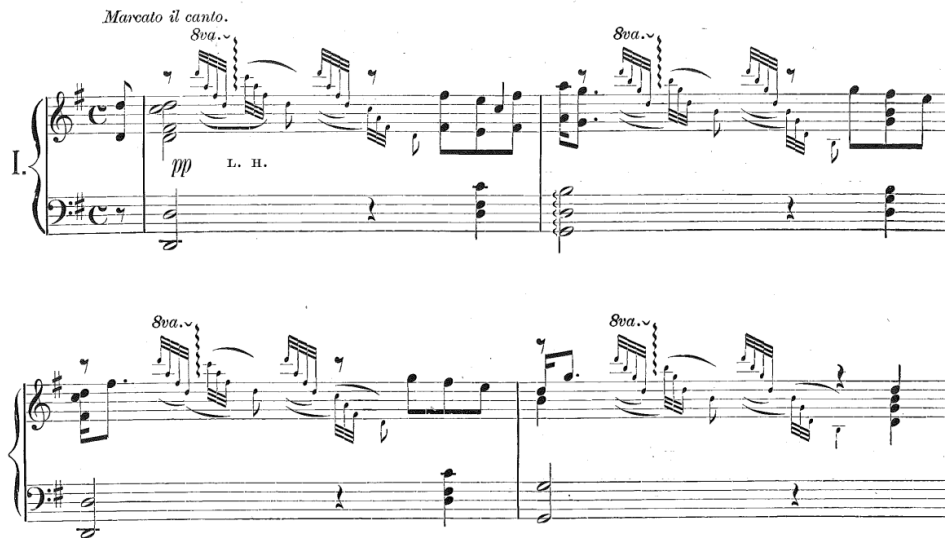
1. The melody of the first part is to be played with a pure finger legato....2. The accompaniment must be played by the points of the fingers, “picking” the keys as one would pick out chords on the guitar....3. In the second part the melody lies in the baritone

⁷⁸ Richardson and Mathews, 100.

register, and is played by the right hand and sustained by means of the pedal...4. The bass is played softly, and while the melody tone is sounding the hands are carried higher upon the keyboard in order to introduce the embellishment...5. The melody tone in this part should be soft, yet full...6. The brackets under the bass show where the pedal is to be taken and left.⁷⁹

With all the added amusements and annotations, the main body of the *New Method* grew from 226 to 287 pages.

Figure 32. Arrangement of “Listen to the Mockingbird,” taken from the revised edition of the *New Method*, 115.



Mathews adds two large appendices followed by one small appendix in the revised edition. The first of these is comprised of selections from William Mason’s *System of Pianoforte Technics*. It is clear that Mathews felt that William Mason was a leading figure, if not *the* leading figure, in nineteenth-century American piano pedagogy. The second appendix quotes sections of Carl Czerny’s *Letters to Young Ladies on the Art of Playing the Piano*. The third appendix is Robert Schumann’s *Rules for Young Musicians* and a compendium of composers’ remarks, titled *Rules and Remarks by the Great Masters*.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

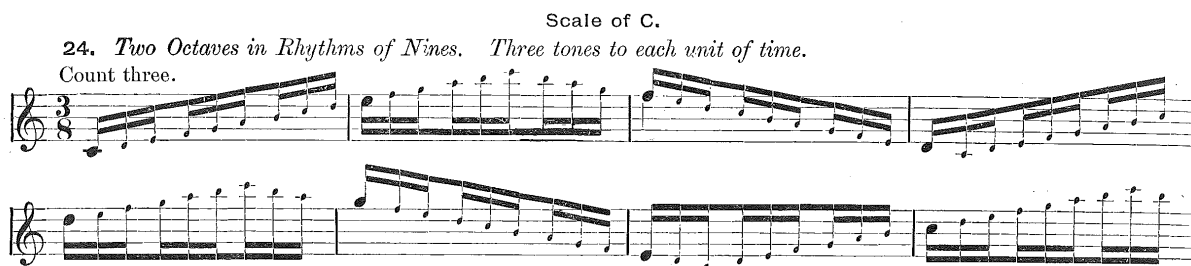
Now, some detail on the contents of the appendices: Mathews introduces the first appendix with the following remark:

In accordance with a desire expressed by many teachers, it has been thought advisable to add to the text of the Richardson Method an Appendix containing the principles and more essential qualities of the system of practice devised by the distinguished American pianist and teacher, Dr. William Mason....The explanations coming from one of the leading exponents and advocates of the Mason System.⁸⁰

W.S.B. Mathews worked closely with William Mason as both editor and co-author of several piano related publications, and while it is not specifically stated, likely Mathews wrote this appendix himself.

This first appendix is comprised of five sections: “(1) the “Two-Finger Exercises,” (2) his system of Arpeggios, based upon the diminished chord, (3) his forms of Scale practice, (4) the Application of Rhythm Exercises, and (5) his Octave method.”⁸¹ Each is explained in some detail and then examples are sometimes written out to illustrate the more complicated exercises.

Figure 33. William Mason exercise, taken from the revised edition of the *New Method*, 302.



⁸⁰ Ibid., 292.

⁸¹ Ibid.

The second appendix, containing excerpts from Carl Czerny's *Letters to Young Ladies on the Art of Playing the Pianoforte*, is intended as a supplement to every approach for the instrument.⁸² Czerny's introductory remarks explain who his main audience for these letters will be.

The reader must suppose, therefore, that, by means of short, friendly, and cheerful letters, I have undertaken to draw the attention of a talented and well-educated girl of about twelve years old, residing at a distance in the country, progressively to every thing which might assist her in the better comprehension and application of the rules which are contained in almost every pianoforte school.⁸³

The appendix is comprised of six of Czerny's ten letters to young ladies. According to Czerny, the reading of each letter was to be spaced out so that the pupil could have time to put into practice what was laid out in each letter: "It is further assumed that each letter follows that which immediately preceded it, after a lapse of about eight or ten weeks; so that the pupil may have sufficient intermediate time to learn all the rules which are laid down, and to avail herself of them in her subsequent practice."⁸⁴ Each of the six letters is titled and has a specific focus: First Rudiments of the Piano; On Touch, Tone, and the Mode of Treating the Pianoforte; On Time, Subdivision of the Notes, and Fingering; On Expression and Graces or Embellishments; On the Keys, on Studying a Piece, and on Playing in the Presence of Others; On the Selection of Compositions Most Suitable for Each Pianist."⁸⁵

⁸² Charles Czerny, *Letters to a Young Lady on the Art of Playing the Pianoforte, From the Earliest Rudiments to the Highest Stage of Cultivation: Written as an Appendix to Every School for that Instrument*, trans. by J.A. Hamilton (London: R. Cocks and Co., 1839), title page.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, preface.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 325-335.

The third appendix quotes Robert Schumann's sixty-eight "Rules for Young Musicians," including admonitions such as: "You must sedulously practice Scales and other finger exercises. But there are many persons who imagine all will be accomplished if they keep on spending many hours each day, till they grow old, in mere mechanical practice. It is about as if one should busy himself daily with repeating the A B C as fast as possible...Use your time better."⁸⁶ Another rule is, "Omit no opportunity, however, to play with others, in duos, trios, etc. It makes your playing fluent, spirited and easy. Accompany a singer when you can."⁸⁷ The last of these rules is, "There is no end of learning."⁸⁸

"Rules and Remarks by the Great Masters" follows Schumann's rules. The masters include C.P.E. Bach, Clementi, Hummel, Czerny, Kalkbrenner, Moscheles, and Thalberg. The remarks are separated into the following five sections: On the Position to be assumed by the Hand and Fingers, for the purpose of Playing on the Pianoforte; On the Manner in Which the Fingers are to be Used for the Purpose of Playing the Pianoforte; On the Importance of Beginners Being Properly Instructed; On the Manner in which those desirous of executing Pieces of Music on the Pianoforte Must Spend the Time to be Devoted to the Attainment of That End; and General Remarks on the Art of Pianoforte Playing."⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ibid., 322.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 323.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Nathan Richardson's *New Method* serves as a precursor to the many piano methods in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Richardson's concept of providing pieces for the amusement and enjoyment of the student must have been well-received because of the longevity of the method. It appeared in print in 1860, 1870, 1887, 1894, 1913, and 1922. According to statistics found in Debra Brubaker's thesis on piano methods published in the United States, its sales exceeded 500,000 copies by the mid-1880s, and by 1905, over a million copies had been sold.⁹⁰

The revised edition of Richardson's *New Method* demonstrates a growing focus on the recreational pianist rather than the aspiring concert pianist. The method is an early example of methodology that introduces all the basic rudiments of music as they apply to the piano. In addition, it also serves as an early example of the inclusion of a variety of musical examples for the purpose of broadening a student's view of technical skills as they apply to the real world of specific piano literature, an approach that is still prevalent in modern piano method books.

With the inclusion of the Rudiments of Harmony and Thorough-bass as an appendix, Richardson also employs another idea that is still in use today. Most modern method books include a theory book along with the lesson and performance books. In the preface to the *New Method*, Richardson emphasizes the importance of music theory in a pianist's education: "A chapter is devoted to the first principles of harmony and thorough bass, a department of music

⁹⁰Debra Brubaker, "A History and Critical Analysis of Piano Methods Published in the United States from 1796-1995" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1996).

much neglected, although of the utmost importance to every one who is desirous of playing well, especially those who have it in view to make teaching the piano a profession.”⁹¹

Richardson’s emphasis on technique clearly caters to a general public that wished to emulate the performing pianists of the nineteenth century. Even though his method does not display the practical and cohesive manner in which methods are organized today, Richardson implemented many revolutionary ideas that helped shape the developing commercial world of American piano pedagogy.

⁹¹ Richardson, preface.

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