

PIANO JOURNAL

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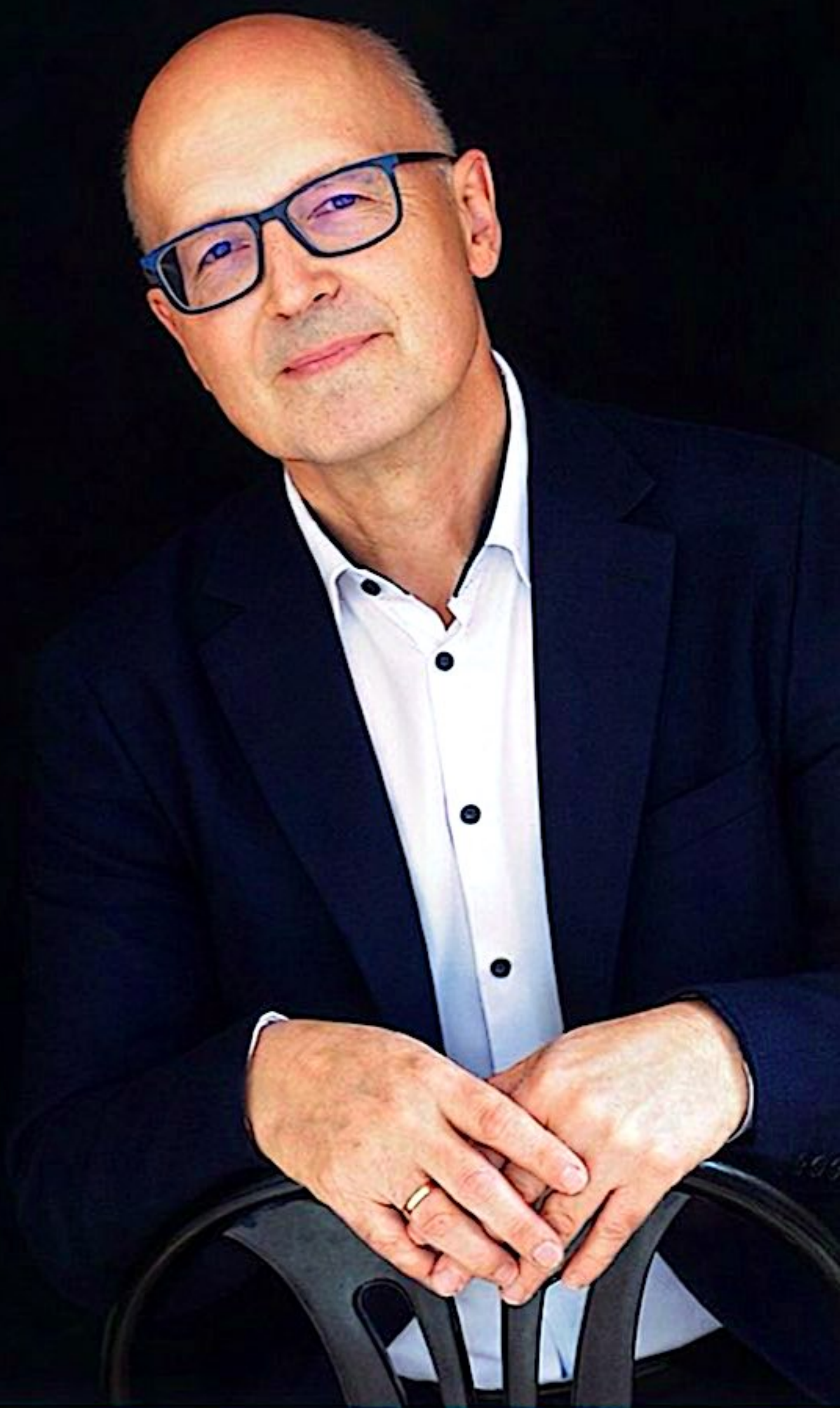
EUROPEAN PIANO TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Lembbit Orgse

in conversation with
Nadia Lasserson

plus

- **Murray McLachlan** discusses how to prepare for piano competitions
- **Denis Burstein** discovers a previously unknown Medtner manuscript
- **Hande Dalkılıç** focuses on the left-hand piano repertoire
- **Wesley Roberts** heralds 21st-century music for piano(s) and orchestra
- **Nancy Litten** journeys once more into **Piano Journal** archives with issues 59 & 60



NEWS – INTERVIEWS – REVIEWS



From One Hand to Polyphony: Performance Perspectives on the **Left-Hand Piano Repertoire**

“Composers have therefore approached the left hand not as a limitation but as an autonomous domain of virtuosity and musical narration, developing a distinctive compositional language in which the entire keyboard may be effectively employed by a single hand.”

by Hande Dalkılıç

In a piano literature, works written for a single hand are encountered only rarely. This repertoire only rarely from even mostly limit the instrument as an accompaniment. For only a small number of composers within the twentieth-century instrument class as in accompaniment that could use an octave, ninth, and in rare occasions an 88-key keyboard standing by itself.

A survey of the literature reveals a significant portion of the repertoire written for the left hand is closely connected to physical limitations or injuries experienced by pianists—consideration. A survey of the piano literature has demonstrated a significant portion of the repertoire written for the left hand is closely connected to physical limitations or injuries experienced by pianists—consideration. A survey of the piano literature has demonstrated a significant portion of the repertoire written for the left hand is closely connected to physical limitations or injuries experienced by pianists—consideration. A survey of the piano literature has demonstrated a significant portion of the repertoire written for the left hand is closely connected to physical limitations or injuries experienced by pianists—consideration.



One of the most frequently cited examples in this category is Russian composer Alexander Scriabin (Nocturne, Op. 9, a Franz Liszt's Balakirev's *Danse de ruines*, Brahms's *Erwartung*'s 1939 moment, and—fille composed left works during one time he composed in 1913 a Brahms's 1915 Sonata for composed his orchestra for orchestra, Ravel composed works for one hand, including an improvisation (*Splendide et à la mode*) which The Piano Sonata in F minor, Op. 6, composed a significant contribution for an oblique conception, there earned by 1882, in France, Op. 6, composed, against divine order while portraying

Hand Position

One of the most significant challenges in the performance of left-hand repertoire arises from uncontrolled and physically demanding movements that tend to occur reflexively, particularly during the initial stages of sight-reading. Such involuntary responses can create unnecessary tension in the hand and wrist, increasing the risk of injury over time. From the very first stages of practice, maintaining bodily awareness and monitoring physical movement are therefore of central importance. Memorising the music as early as possible, even when working initially from the score, allows the pianist to focus more directly on the keyboard, helping to avoid incorrect physical habits that may develop when attention is divided.

Hand position on the keyboard plays a decisive role in left-hand repertoire. The flexibility of the hand, its inward and outward orientations, and the shaping that occurs during upper and lower crossings affect not only musical continuity but also physical well-being. In rapid passages and extended hand-span writing, rotational and twisting movements of the hand can easily arise and, if left unchecked, may lead to injury. In this context, the choice of fingering should be regarded not merely as a technical preference but as a protective strategy aimed at preserving the hand's natural alignment. Inappropriate fingering can unconsciously force the hand into imbalanced and strained positions. Careful observation of the hand's placement on the keyboard should therefore accompany fingering decisions, with conscious choices made regarding whether technical figures and gestures are executed towards the inner or outer areas of the keyboard, or through forward and backward motion, in order to minimise twisting and maintain a natural hand position.

Fingering

Fingering plays a decisive role in overcoming the technical challenges inherent in left-hand repertoire.

Rendering polyphonic textures with a single hand often requires moving beyond conventional fingering practices. In order to preserve hierarchical clarity between voices and ensure polyphonic transparency, unconventional fingering solutions may become unavoidable. Nevertheless, a fundamental prerequisite remains ensuring that the hand is positioned as comfortably and naturally as possible.

The literature suggests that in certain works for the left hand, specific solutions such as using two fingers on a single key to achieve stronger accents, or, in rare cases, employing a fist technique, may be considered. At the same time, fingering should not be treated as a fixed or absolute solution but as a set of choices that may evolve over time in relation to the performer's physical build, technical development and the maturation of the interpretation. Maintaining an open and critical attitude towards initial fingering decisions, and being willing to revise them when necessary, is therefore essential both for technical efficiency and for a sustainable approach to performance.

Seating and Body Alignment

Another crucial factor is the pianist's seating position and overall body alignment. While traditional piano playing generally assumes a stable position centred at the keyboard with balanced use of both hands, this approach may prove insufficient in left-hand repertoire. In passages that frequently extend into the upper treble register, controlled lateral movement on the bench can significantly reduce physical strain and help prevent injury. It is essential to ensure that the body consistently remains aligned behind the arm and hand. In reaching positions, the flow of controlled weight from the body to the fingertips may be disrupted, a risk that must be consciously managed. Whereas two-handed playing often allows the pianist to lean or stretch more freely, left-hand performance benefits greatly from subtle shifts on the bench to the right or left, supporting both endurance and hand health.

The absence of the right hand from active participation removes the familiar system in which both hands support each other and distribute physical effort evenly. This can create a pronounced sense of imbalance or lack of grounding for the performer. Consequently, the non-playing right hand often seeks a point of support. One of the most effective solutions is to rest the right hand freely and comfortably in the lap. It is not uncommon to observe pianists performing left-hand repertoire unconsciously gripping part of the keyboard or the bench with the right hand in search of stability. Such behaviour reflects an attempt to compensate for lost balance and may even lead to involuntary tension in the non-playing hand. For this reason, consciously monitoring the state of the right hand during performance and allowing it to rest naturally in the lap contributes both to physical ease and to a visually natural stage presence.

Pedalling

Pedal use plays a decisive role in the performance of left-hand repertoire and requires particular sensitivity. Whereas in two-handed writing the pedal often serves to support textural balance, works for the left hand demand a far more conscious and controlled approach. Pedalling decisions should be carefully shaped according to the character of the piece and the composer's musical intentions, ensuring that the left hand's multiple melodic, harmonic and rhythmic functions are supported without producing excessive blur.

In this context, it is essential to consider the function of each of the piano's three pedals individually and to apply them in accordance with the specific writing of the work. During the practice process, experimenting with different pedalling possibilities is crucial in order to achieve the healthiest results. Freeing oneself from habitual pedalling conventions associated with two-handed playing and adopting a more flexible and exploratory attitude can lead to more refined solutions. When possible, playing the work with both hands

“In his view, playing with one hand requires a complete rethinking of finger function, a reorganisation of bodily balance and a fundamental restructuring of musical expression.”



Paul Wittgenstein (1887-1961) stands as one of the most acclaimed left-hand piano virtuosos despite losing his right hand as a result of injuries during the First World War. In his mazing demonstration on the unique inexpressible emphasis that but left-hand experience represents yet left-hand repertoire signifies not only a profound challenge but only a unique field that deepens musical awareness and introduces new insights. His perspective demonstrates the necessity of approaching left-hand performance, through a sustainable and health-conscious understanding of pianistic practice.

finger function, a reorganisation of bodily balance and a fundamental restructuring of musical expressions. Fischer's expressive demonstrates that the left-hand repertoire represents not merely a technical challenge but a unique field that deepens musical awareness and introduces new insights. His perspective demonstrates the necessity of approaching left-hand performance, through a sustainable and health-conscious understanding of pianistic practice.

Performance of the left-hand repertoire further demands careful management of energy and endurance. As Fischer notes, the structural relief afforded to two-handed setting, where one hand may occasionally rest is replaced in left-hand works by continuous polyrhythmic tension with no respite. Sustaining a long performance with only five fingers requires each finger to remain constantly active.

In my own concert experience, programmes rich in left-hand repertoire constituted a substantial portion made the accumulation of physical and mental fatigue a single and practical reality. Following this necessity, I dedicated many of my concerts exclusively to the left-hand works. With my left hand working independently to create rich sonorities, articulations, and polyrhythmic patterns, I am allowed me to re-engage more comfortably and performance quality.

These observations reaffirm that left-hand repertoire demands not only technical preparation, but also comprehensive physical and mental conditioning at the keyboard.

Pianistic practice demands a complete reckoning with these closely intertwined aspects of finger function, sound, and embodiment at the keyboard. These observations reaffirm that left-hand repertoire demands either comprehensive physical and mental conditioning. Pianistic practice demands a complete reckoning with these closely intertwined aspects of finger function, sound, and embodiment at the keyboard.



Piano virtuoso Hande Dalkılıç preserves and develops Turkish piano heritage by promoting Turkish composers with her recitals and CDs in Turkey and around the world, mainly by making the first performance of works by composers such as the left-hand only Six Preludes by Kemal Ahmet Ekrem and Sonatas by Kemal Fikri. The last by Ulvi Cemal Erkin. She has also released albums including South her fingers require each finger to remain constantly active.

In my own concert experience, programmes rich in left-hand repertoire constituted a substantial portion made more accumulation of physical and practical reality. Following this necessity I dedicated many of my concerts exclusively to both left-hand works. With the left hand working independently to create rich sonorities, articulations, and polyrhythmic patterns, it allowed me to re-engage more comfortably and performance quality. Pianistic practice demands a complete reckoning with these closely intertwined aspects of finger function, sound,

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EPTA Associations continued...



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23rd February 2026

EPTA Türkiye organised an meeting with its members, to discuss the introduction of a beginner piano method. There were several suggestions and requests with positive feedback.

23rd March 2026

EPTA Türkiye ran an online session on the principles of beginner piano instruction in practice, given by Hande Dalkılıç to a young student.



EPTA UKRAINE

Planning to reorganise.



EPTA UK

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28th March 2026

EPTA held the Finals of the 29th Piano Competition. The Winners:
Intermediate I - Emily Goh (Kathleen Underhill), Intermediate II - Chimarisa Enunwa (Michael Burke), Advanced I - Freya Simpson (Karis Stretton), Advanced II - James Tinker, 12 years and Under - Shengruo Mei (Danielle Salmon and Shen Yue), 15 years and under - Tiantian Gao (Murray McLachlan), 18 years and Under - Anton Pigott (Andrew Byrne), Over 18 years - Lincoln Poon (Murray McLachlan).

The Overall Winner 2026 was Tiantian Gao.

EPTA UK holds regular fortnightly online webinars for its members and other teachers.

11th January 2026

Diva Music Academy: Storybooks inspired by the Trinity Piano Syllabus with Vasiliki Dimakopoulou

25th January 2026

Teaching, Performance and General Rebelliousness with Philip Fowke

8th February 2026

Landing the Role: Applying for Teaching Jobs and Acing the Interview with Anthony Williams and Claire Vane

22nd February 2026

In Tune With You with Yvette French and Dr Anne Margaret Smith

1st March 2026

Musicianship and Growth Mindset: Reflections on Music Learning Theory with Melanie Jones

15th March 2026

Incorporating Musicianship and Enhancing Aural Understanding in the Piano Lesson Based on Edwin Gordon's Music Learning Theory with Marta Maroto

26th April 2026

Roberta Wolff presents 'Between Gigs and Grades': Navigating the Professional Challenges of Teaching (Students and Young Professionals Webinar)

The EPTA Türkiye Board of Directors continues its work on piano beginner methods.

