

Piano Professional Reviews

Piano-Yoga Transform your hands

www.piano-yoga.com

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ISBN 978-0-9561184-5-5A complete ten week course of piano exercises.

Created by GÉNIA

It really does work. GÉNIA came to demonstrate her Piano Yoga method at last year's EPTA UK Conference and I tried it out only to find myself experiencing muscular pains as a result. I contacted the author to discuss this problem and she most generously offered to come and work with me, so convinced is she that the method does work.

I had clearly attempted to roller-coast too quickly and GÉNIA patiently showed me how to work through the exercises with flat hands and fingers, playing very slowly to build up this particular aspect of muscular stretching by using a complete new set of muscles. I promised faithfully to work every day for the prescribed six weeks and I did begin to notice that large chord stretches were becoming easier to attempt and less problematical with my ageing process.

The work is in several stages and there are clear photographs with the preliminary warm-ups: thumb, digits, wrist, shadow yoga, sitting, knuckles and flat finger exercises. This is to ensure that every pianist derives full benefit from the warm-ups with no possible confusion and really understands the workings of the hands. There then follow eight piano warm-up exercises which are not only for preparing the muscles but also to ensure that the correct set of muscles are used. The first stage is then worked through with its

seven exercises, with each one a little more stretchy than its predecessor thus ensuring a very gradual process. This section should take two weeks for the fingers and body to reap full benefit. An extensive repertoire list is included to while away the two weeks of exercises.

Stage One: Core Piano-Yoga includes seven exercises with increasing stretch as they progress. There are two sections, one for small hands and one for players with large hands. These definitely become easier with time and, eventually, one hardly notices the stretches. A further recommended repertoire list follows before **Stage Two's Yin Piano-Yoga**. This section is directly derivative of yoga with its breathing and stretching. Applied to the hands, this is extremely powerful and effective with comfortable stretching applied to every combination of two fingers with considerable ease and flexibility accomplished by the end of one month.

Stage Three: Advanced Piano-Yoga consists of six exercises based on the previous sections but with fewer notes and funkier rhythms. These are actually quite complex and require great concentration to maintain the quirky rhythms while sustaining a warm legato touch throughout. Naturally, the chords become increasingly stretchy as the exercises unfold but there is a sense of well-being and achievement when completed.

GÉNIA, the author, is a fine concert pianist who "embraces classical music, contemporary repertoire and multimedia projects" but who also has very small hands and has had to develop a virtuosic technique to be able to tackle the widely-varied piano works that face her. This very holistic approach to piano practice has enabled her to reach the highly regarded position she holds in the profession.

Many ailing pianists have been helped with this unorthodox and unusual method of piano stretching and it is a good feeling to be able to play more freely after working through this method. All teachers should give it a try, not only for themselves but also for their pupils who deserve to play with complete relaxation and ease in all repertoire.

■ **Nadia Lasserson**