

Bridging Motor Control and Musical Expression: A Pedagogical Model Grounded in Deliberate Practice

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Summary of content.

In this lecture, I present the work I have carried out over the past several years with my undergraduate and graduate piano students. By integrating the principles of Deliberate Practice, I help students develop targeted goals that enhance both physical awareness and technical ability. A key element of this approach is cultivating a consistent habit of describing their movements and sound in detail. Students begin by learning the fundamental movements of the upper body, then progress to identifying which muscle groups are responsible for specific actions and which can remain less active, promoting more efficient and healthier playing.

Grounded in the research of Dr. Anders Ericsson—my mentor in his later years—this pedagogical method encourages students to start each practice session with clearly defined goals. These goals include objective descriptors for precision and technical clarity, as well as subjective reflections to deepen emotional connection. This dual awareness has consistently improved students' ability to understand and communicate the mechanics of their technique. By combining knowledge of the piano's physical properties, the body's physiology, and structured Deliberate Practice, students develop more sustainable, expressive, and expert-level performance habits.