

# Finger Gym 1

Paul Edmund-Davies

09/11/2014

The musical score consists of ten staves of piano exercises. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first two staves are in the key of D major. The third staff concludes with a double bar line and a key signature change to B-flat major. The fourth and fifth staves are in B-flat major. The sixth staff concludes with a double bar line and a key signature change to D major. The seventh and eighth staves are in D major. The ninth and tenth staves conclude with a double bar line and a key signature change to B-flat major. Each staff contains two measures of music. The first measure of each staff features a series of eighth notes, and the second measure features a series of sixteenth notes. Dynamic markings of *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte) are placed below the notes, with a hairpin crescendo or decrescendo indicating the change. Slurs are used to group the notes in each measure. The exercises are designed to improve finger dexterity and control.

My fingers have always bothered me! They have often had a mind of their own and when required to be obedient, they have decided to ignore my wishes! So here is a very simple exercise to gain some more independence in these unruly characters.

Start off by practicing the exercise slowly and really concentrate on the finger or fingers that are lifting. After all, the muscles that close your hand are much stronger than those that open it! The fingers need to be positive, but also should never travel too far away from the keys.....the further they go away, the longer it takes to get back again. Not exactly ideal for the second or last movements of the Prokofiev Sonata! Once the thought/brain to finger connection feels more comfortable and positive, gradually increase the tempo.

I feel that dynamics are important when playing technical exercises (after all, they are a significant part of music), so do be sure to make shapes. Apart from anything else, it will make everything more interesting for you and any other poor soul who happens to be within earshot when you set off!

Double dotting the 16<sup>th</sup> notes (semi-quavers for those of us who like to stick to good old traditions), will also help set up a greater degree of discipline.

I have only printed out three keys, but if you can, I would suggest continuing up the register of the flute, as this exercise becomes highly useful for those awkward top octave fingerings (despite the protestations of the local dog community). Thinking the keys through (rather than staring at music on paper) is also an excellent work out for the brain and greater co-ordination.

For exercises and studies I also try to use the long fingering for B flat. Never essential when playing pieces, but useful for gaining greater finger strength and independence.

If you can manage 20 minutes a day of this exercise, you should see some positive results within a month. It has definitely worked for me!

# Finger Gym 2

Paul Edmund-Davies

16/11/2014

The musical score consists of 12 staves of piano exercises. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 12/8 time signature. The exercises are characterized by continuous eighth-note patterns, often spanning across bar lines. Dynamic markings such as *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte) are used throughout to indicate volume changes. Many exercises include slurs and accents (>) to guide the performer's phrasing and articulation. The key signatures vary across the staves, including major, minor, and augmented/diminished keys. The exercises are designed to improve finger independence and control.

Here is another very simple exercise to establish a more secure finger technique.

Start off by practicing the exercise slowly and really concentrate on the finger or fingers that are lifting. After all, the muscles that close your hand are much stronger than those that open it! These are legato exercises, so the fingers also have to respond in a 'legato' way. So, playing these exercises is as much about the 'feel' of the fingers as the mechanical/physical technique. You might find it useful to take a look in the mirror whilst you are playing to see just how smooth your finger action can be. The fingers need to be positive, but also should never travel too far away from the keys.....the further they go away, the longer it takes to get back again. If they fly towards outer space when lifting, The Flight of the Bumble Bee will become a very bumpy and uncomfortable ride! Once the thought/brain to finger connection feels more comfortable and positive, gradually increase the tempo.

I feel that dynamics are important when playing technical exercises (after all, they are a significant part of music), so do be sure to make shapes.

I have only printed out eight keys, but if you can, I would suggest continuing up the register of the flute, as this exercise becomes highly useful for those awkward top octave fingerings (again, so SLOW practice is essential here). Thinking the keys through (rather than staring at music on paper) is also an excellent work out for the brain and greater co-ordination.

For exercises and studies I also try to use the long fingering for B flat. Never essential when playing pieces, but useful for gaining greater finger strength and independence. It will also help if you can try to always put your little finger right hand down for C2 and E2.

If you can manage 20 minutes a day of this exercise, you should see some positive results within a month.

# Finger Gym 3

Paul Edmund-Davies

24/11/2014

The musical score for "Finger Gym 3" is written in 12/8 time and consists of 12 staves of music. The piece begins with a *mp* dynamic. The first two staves feature a continuous eighth-note pattern with a *Cresc.* marking and a *mf* dynamic. The third staff continues with a *dim.* dynamic. The fourth staff has a *mp* dynamic with a *cresc.* marking. The fifth staff features a *mf* dynamic with a *dim.* marking. The sixth staff has a *mp* dynamic with a *cresc.* marking. The seventh staff features a *mf* dynamic with a *dim.* marking. The eighth staff has a *mp* dynamic with a *cresc.* marking. The ninth staff features a *mf* dynamic with a *dim.* marking. The tenth staff has a *mp* dynamic with a *cresc.* marking. The eleventh staff features a *mf* dynamic with a *dim.* marking. The twelfth staff has a *mp* dynamic with a *cresc.* marking. The piece concludes with a final *mp* dynamic.

I *cant* imagine many people are going to be happy with me for this next one! It is a REAL brain teaser (and quite irritating)! However, if you can put in the regular sessions (five minutes here, five minutes there) your co-ordination (and concentration!) will (hopefully) improve dramatically.

I have said this before, but start off by practicing the exercise slowly and really concentrate on the finger or fingers that are lifting. After all, the muscles that close your hand are much stronger than those that open it!

I would also suggest that initially you just focus on one group of six notes at a time and play these as a loop. Get used to the fact that the second note is a semitone higher than the first and the third note is a tone lower. Try to imbed this pattern into your head. These are legato exercises, so the fingers also have to respond in a 'legato' way. So, playing these exercises is as much about the 'feel' of the fingers as the mechanical/physical technique. You might find it useful to take a look in the mirror whilst you are playing to see just how smooth your finger action can be. The fingers need to be positive, but also should never travel too far away from the keys.....the further they go away, the longer it takes to get back again. Once the thought/brain to finger connection feels more comfortable and positive, gradually increase the tempo. If you can learn to play these exercises without the music in front of you, it will also eventually help flow.

I feel that dynamics are important when playing technical exercises (after all, they are a significant part of music), so do be sure to make shapes.

I have only printed out three keys, but if you can, I would suggest continuing a semitone at a time, further up the register of the flute, as this exercise becomes highly useful for those awkward top octave fingerings ( SLOW practice is essential here). One octave above line one is as far as you need go (unless you are feeling particularly brave!).

For exercises and studies I also try to use the long fingering for B flat. Never essential when playing pieces, but useful for gaining greater finger strength and independence. It will also help if you can try to always put your little finger right hand down for C2 and E2.

If you can manage 20 minutes a day of this exercise, you should see some positive results within a month.



This latest exercise is designed to create as much evenness in our fingers as possible. It is really an arpeggio with the second note in the scale being added. On paper of course, relatively simple, but in practice, so much more difficult to control smoothly than the comparatively innocent arpeggio! There is a sense of sequence and gradual build to this exercise.

I haven't helped matters by starting from the very bottom notes of the flute, so for an easier start and just to get some familiarity, you might initially like to see how it feels a third higher (starting in G minor). This will also initially avoid over stretching fingers 4 and 5 in the right hand. As far as transposition is concerned, don't panic! Just think the sequence through (it's all minor keys) and gradually let your brain get involved! In the end you should be able to play this exercise in any key without having to look at the music.

This week's exercise has arrived in your in-box later than I had hoped and this is because I have spent most of the last week in recording studios in London (one TV series due out in February next year and two movies). For some of this, I have had to transpose material to be played on alto flute. Normally, the parts are printed out in the correct key, but sometimes they are not (ie this week)! Increasingly, musicians will need to adapt to the new challenges that face us, so transposition is a useful ability to have on tap! In all of these exercises I am trying to get us all more used to thinking in keys, rather than simply using our eyes to absorb information.

Start off by practicing the exercise slowly and once again, concentrate on the finger or fingers that are lifting.

As before, shape and direction are also important. Just be careful that as the phrases rise and you observe the diminuendo, you don't end up playing notes under pitch at the top! A combination of support (more energy is required to play 'piano' in tune) and a small upward adjustment of the air column will contribute to solving this issue.

Also as before, I would suggest continuing further up the register of the flute as far as you can, as this exercise becomes highly useful for those awkward top octave fingerings (SLOW practice is essential here).

For exercises and studies I also try to use the long fingering for B flat. Never essential when playing pieces, but useful for gaining greater finger strength and independence.

If you can manage 10 minutes a day of this exercise, you should see some positive results within a month.