

THE LANG LANG EFFECT

Launching a new piano series is always something to be excited about, but when one of the world's leading concert pianists is involved, things go up a gear. Since the launch of the Lang Lang Piano Academy in September 2014, everyone's been talking about the new technique series **mastering the piano...**



By Melanie Spanswick
The Classical Piano and
Music Education Blog

"I was invited to attend the launch of Lang Lang's new Piano Academy and the series of piano books *mastering the piano*, published by Faber Music. Held at the intimate 1901 Arts Club in Waterloo, London, the event was beautifully arranged with an

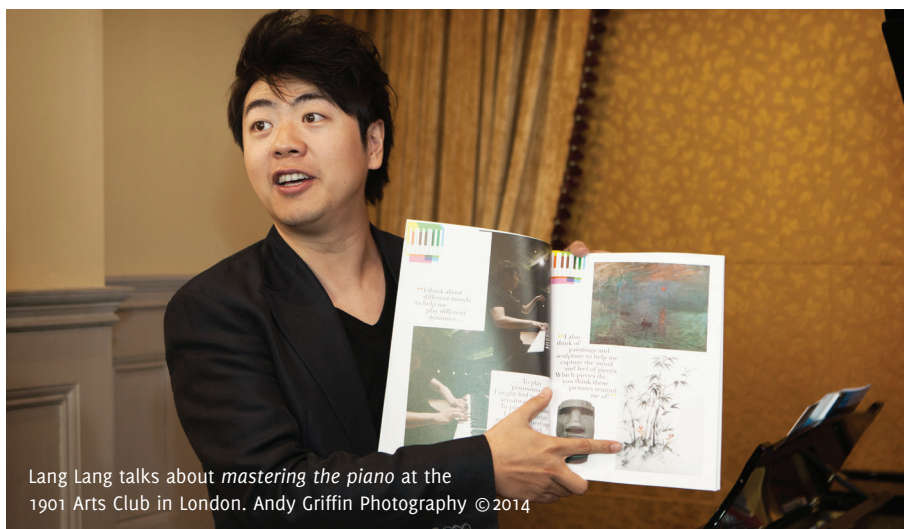
impromptu performance and talk by Lang Lang himself. He chatted informally about the reasons for collaborating with Faber Music and described it as a 'lifelong dream' to produce a series of books such as these. His heart genuinely lies in music education, and for me this really is a joy to behold. Lang Lang takes the time and opportunity to highlight and endorse the importance of playing the piano, and more importantly, playing it effectively.

The books focus on *how* to play and are not a piano method per se, as the sub-heading clearly states: *'Technique, studies and repertoire for the developing pianist'*. Starting at around Grade 1 up to Grade 5 plus, there are photos, demonstrations and advice from Lang Lang regarding how to tackle various techniques

and styles of music. Pieces, exercises and studies infiltrate the pages, with lots of superlative practice and preparation ideas from correct posture and hand positions to the importance of rhythm and hand coordination.

Each chapter is preceded by a 'Message from Lang Lang' and practice features and technical advice is arranged in units, which appear with corresponding advice based around relevant pieces and exercises. All pieces are assiduously examined, and a wealth of tips and practice suggestions are provided. It's not unusual or indeed unexpected for musicians to be influenced by other art forms, but Lang Lang specifically mentions the significance of paintings and sculpture for capturing a musical mood and examples are shown throughout as a reminder.

These books will no doubt prove popular with a plethora of pupils of all ages who want a learning tool for help and guidance as they work to develop a fluent technique and greater musical understanding. They are not designed to replace the piano teacher, or to be a specific 'method', but should rather be incorporated with other materials to attain a whole and well-rounded piano education. To this end, Lang Lang and Faber Music have done a sterling job."



Lang Lang talks about *mastering the piano* at the 1901 Arts Club in London. Andy Griffin Photography ©2014

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Mastering the piano level 1, Fiona Lau, Music Teacher Magazine

"The whole book is very user friendly and has a pleasingly personal touch, with messages from Lang Lang, several colour pictures of him playing and tips saying how he masters each technique. This is not a traditional 'Dozen A Day' type of technical book, it is more than that, linking exercises, repertoire and tips in one volume. I can see this being a very useful and effective book for my Grade 1 and 2 pupils – they probably will not even realise that it is about technique, and the 'Lang Lang effect' may encourage and inspire them in an imaginative way."

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Lang Lang live on BBC 1's The One Show with Matt Baker and Alex Jones. Courtesy of the BBC

Media Coverage

In addition to meeting with key music retailers, writers and educationalists for the launch on 2nd September, Lang Lang also packed in a whistle-stop tour of the UK's media. Appearing live on BBC 1's The One Show as part of their Music Festival week, he demonstrated aspects of his piano technique covered in the *mastering the piano* books to presenters Matt Baker and Alex Jones. Earlier that evening, Lang Lang appeared live on BBC Radio 3's In Tune with Sean Rafferty, where he answered listeners' questions about piano technique and his new series, as well as performing pieces from the books. On BBC Radio 4's Front Row with John Wilson, he gave an inspiring masterclass-style interview and listeners of Classic FM could catch him talking to Charlotte Green on her Culture Club show on Sunday 7th September.