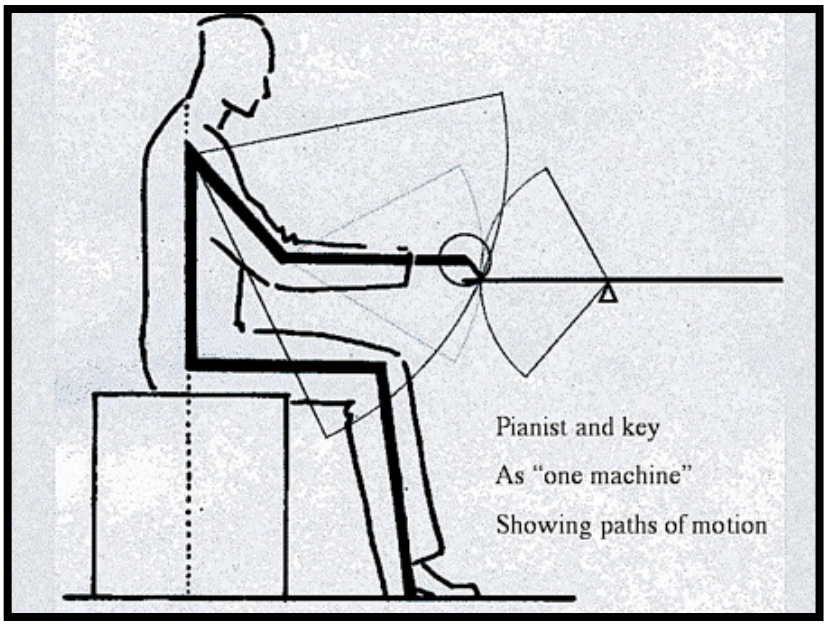

• Practice Tips:

• How much to practice:

A minimum 3 good practices a week is suggested. More is better, of course, but 3-a-week is minimum. I've found that if practicing is generally less, there'll come a point where progress is not happening and lessons will stall out. If a student does not get the pieces to the place where they are fun to play, they will not get the musical reward and it is then always 'work'. Whereas if they get the pieces over-the-hump to the place where they are enjoyable - they will want to play and practice more.

• What to practice:

Lessons consist of the following categories - which students should cover as best they can throughout the week. They don't have to cover every category each practice session. Sometimes a session can be just one of them - especially as I reccommend lots of short practices mixed with long ones.

> 'Technique':

These are scales and exercises. Scales are as fundamental to piano playing as dribbling the ball is in basketball - and very similar - they are how you 'get around' on the piano. Exercises live up to their name and develop the muscles of hands to play music with. I incorporate 'exercises' with 'Arpeggios' - therefore that category

has multiple functions. See more on Scales and Hand-Position in the 'Additional Section' below.

> 'Old Friends':

This refers to the pieces that students have already learned, perhaps performed in group class/'living room concerts' - and need to keep 'alive' by playing once in awhile. Sometimes once or twice a week is all that is needed. In this way the student builds up a nice 'repertoire' of pieces which they can perform at will - and have pieces which are easy (now) and fun - so they are not always just working hard at new ones. It is from these pieces that students choose when they play for friends and family.

> 'New Pieces':

This refers to the new pieces-of-the-week we are working on.

> 'Arpeggios':

This refers to the system of chord progression-based improvisation which I've developed and which is introduced at various stages of the students' development. This activity encompasses excercise work, improvisation, composition, music concepts and is a **great way for the student to warm up - especially if they seem not in the mood to practise!** Often doing arpeggios leads to the student to start writing a piece of their own. If a student chooses to spend their whole practise period doing this and they really seem into it - Dr. Kaufman is pleased. Through this system all manner of music concepts are taught including scales, harmony, intervals, transposition- and on. the more they do it the more they are connected to their sense of the piano being a place for their own musical universe to blossom.

>' Composition':

Sometimes an outgrowth of 'Arpeggios', but often a separate assignment completely, composing can be the most important of all activities. Every student is different. If a student is 'into their piece', composing can take the place of other facets of their practice week, temporarily, especially as we approach concert time and are readying their piece for performance.

• How to practice: additional practice concepts:

• Soon after Lesson!:

Try to 'anchor' a practice session, even a short one, as soon after the weekly lesson as possible - perhaps the same evening if your lesson is early enough in the day. This session would be for the purpose of going over the very newest material while it's fresh on the students' mind. With the best of intentions, waiting a couple of days for the big three-hour practice session can be undermined by forgetting the new material.

• Spot Checking: Divide and Conquer!:

It is possible, indeed quite common, for students to spend a lot of time kind of wandering through a piece from beginning to end. But some parts of pieces are much harder than others - so playing though the easy parts over and over while 'getting though' the hard parts wastes alot of time and the piece has not been advanced much if at all. Better to SPOT CHECK! - These parts are indicated on the music by my markings - usually two slash marks here and there to show the spots. Rather than ten minutes of wandering through the piece - much better to spend 3 or 4 minutes working the spot(s). They can really accomplish something this way, learn the piece much quicker and better and learn effective practice and study habits!

• Lots of Short Practice Sessions:

Dr. Kaufman has no problem with a student sitting and practicing for hours at a time - but this is often not possible. In addition to that model add this one - 'Lots of Short Sessions'. Using the 'Spot Check' concept a student can sit for a short time and accomplish a great deal - perhaps finish off one 'spot' and greatly move a piece along. This would look like - the student plays for a bit, then runs around or does English home-work - then between Math and Science, plays music for five minutes - and on. If they are Clarinet players (or flute, trumpet, etc.) - leave the instrument out! Inspire them to pick it up and play for a short while, put it down - and on. In this way music is interwoven throughout their experience - rather than a separate activity - and the results are much better.

• After Dinner Concerts:

You may wish to try a weekly concert - after dinner on a weekend, for example. Have the student play a couple of your 'favorites', previous or upcoming concert pieces and a bit of the new one they are working on. Establishing this as a regular family rhythm can have strong results.

• Anchoring:

If you need to get practicing happening try 'Anchoring'. This is where you find a time - for example just before or after a weekly activity such as 'swimming' or 'karate' - and you make it a definite practice time - no ifs ands, or buts! They'll get used to it, eventually do it without urging and you've successfully 'anchored' a practice time. That's one. Then you can anchor some more. One of the best 'anchors' is - 'every day after or before dinner'.

• More on Scales:

As a student learns more and more scales it is good to adopt the following method - Practice one or two scales each time, as a warm-up, but do different ones each time. That way you go through them all each week, but it never takes more time than is palatable. Occaisionally have a 'scale fest' and do them all.

• HAND POSITION!:

One of the most difficult and important things to teach in all instrumental playing, expecially the strings and piano is Hand Position. Sometimes a student gets it right away and that is a blessing, but it is vital that the wrists are UP and the fingers CURVED. This keeps the weight of the arms above the piano and the fingers are as equal and flexible as possible. I use terms such as 'tiger paws', and 'flying like an eagle', etc. to get the point across. You can notice and manually form their hands into the proper shape. Another metaphor is 'marionette puppets' where strings pull the wrists up and everything else is relaxed. Make sure the neck and shoulders are not tense and that the elbows are not raised. Another image is the 'crane' pose in Kung Fu.