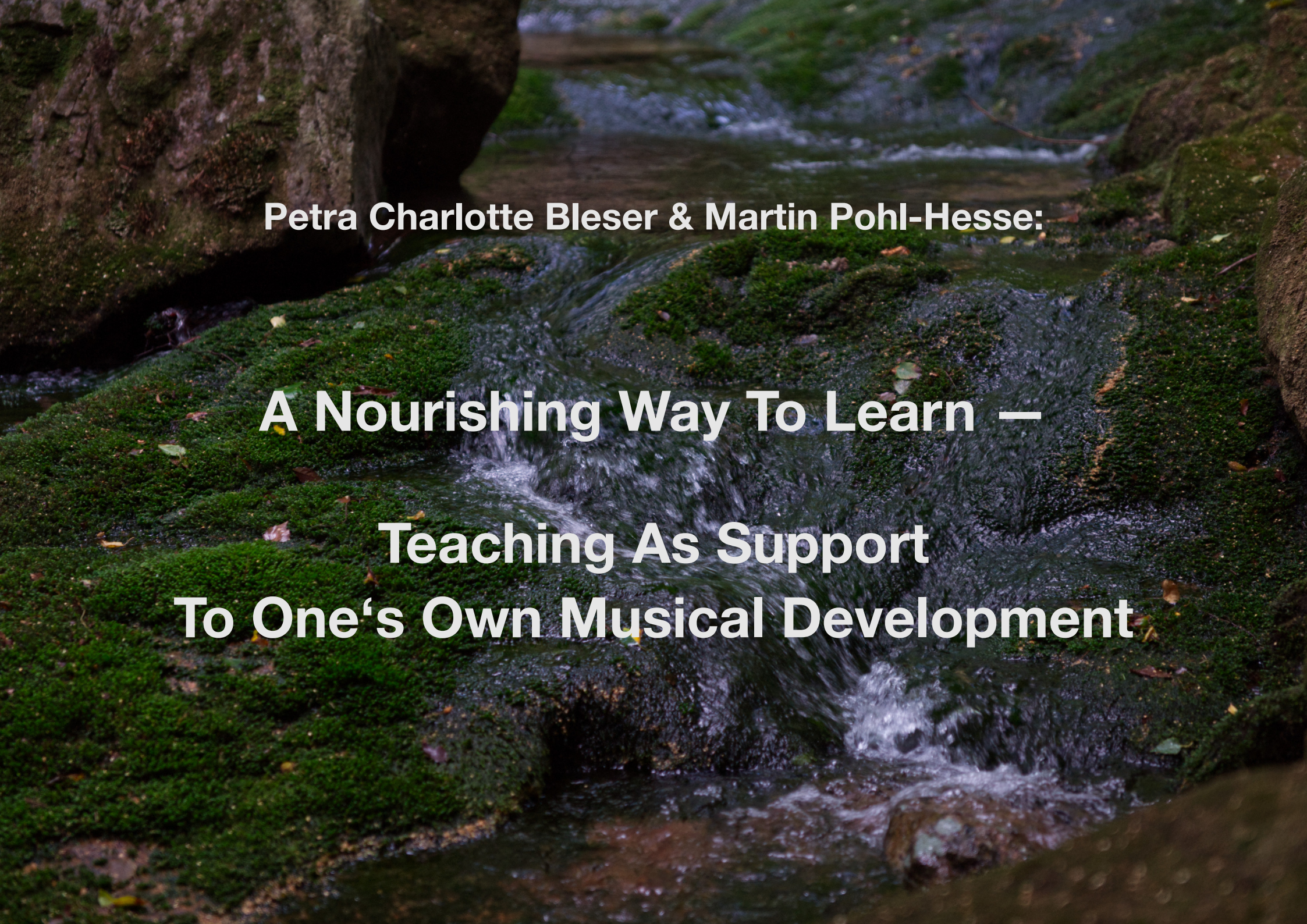


A photograph of a small waterfall cascading over mossy rocks in a forest. The water is clear and flows over a series of dark, wet rocks covered in vibrant green moss. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the forest and the continuation of the stream.

Petra Charlotte Bleser & Martin Pohl-Hesse:

**A Nourishing Way To Learn —
Teaching As Support
To One's Own Musical Development**

Listening – Feeling

Reading – Looking

Listening – Feeling

How do we acquire music, how do we gain musical experience? Because their parents communicate with them, little children learn over the years to express themselves in their native language, and this happens before they have even seen a single letter. That comes later, when they realise that what is spoken can also be fixed in writing. You can write, but you can also look: there is something written there, and it has a meaning. Letters, words, sentences — this builds up step by step. And then it becomes possible to look at what is written there and reproduce it and understand its meaning.

With music it should be the same. With a bit of luck, your parents sang with you when you were still a little child, or played something for you, or both. And if a child is able to sing along, it becomes familiar with the voice, the first and innate instrument — nature has given us this ability. Only much later is musical notation learned, So, what I mean: in learning music it is very important that many senses are engaged and work together, and that receptive, mental comprehension and active, playful doing exist in a healthy, natural balance. In this sense, music is nourishment for us, for our organism, our senses, and our soul. Which sense predominates in whom, when, and where, differs — or shifts. And everyone has a different listening experience.

Artistically active in one's own way

I want to consider the following theme: How can my students learn to play the piano in a way that lets them become artistically active in a manner that is entirely appropriate for them - whether it's about practicing music in their everyday life, pursuing music as a profession, or just becoming an artist of life. It seems important to me to experience that development is always possible. That every student comes to know their own abilities, learns to assess them, and learns to value them. On their path of learning, it is also important to experience how students can expand their abilities. This applies already in childhood, but of course later too.



And it concerns everyday life: no matter how many tools I offer for daily practice, the students themselves need an idea that and how they can improve while trusting their own ideas and taking on responsibility for themselves.

This means: they also have to get to know themselves.

**Experience through experimentation,
playful acquisition of insights,
discovering one's own path of learning.**

The most important sense is, of course, hearing; the other senses are added to that. What's interesting is how everything works together. We see the notes on a page. So: the eyes are involved when we read music. One has to learn and know: what kind of notes are these? What are the notes called? Now comes the next step: translating that into action — the decisive part. As pianists we need to know which key is meant, so we need orientation on the keyboard. And then I also feel: the keys.

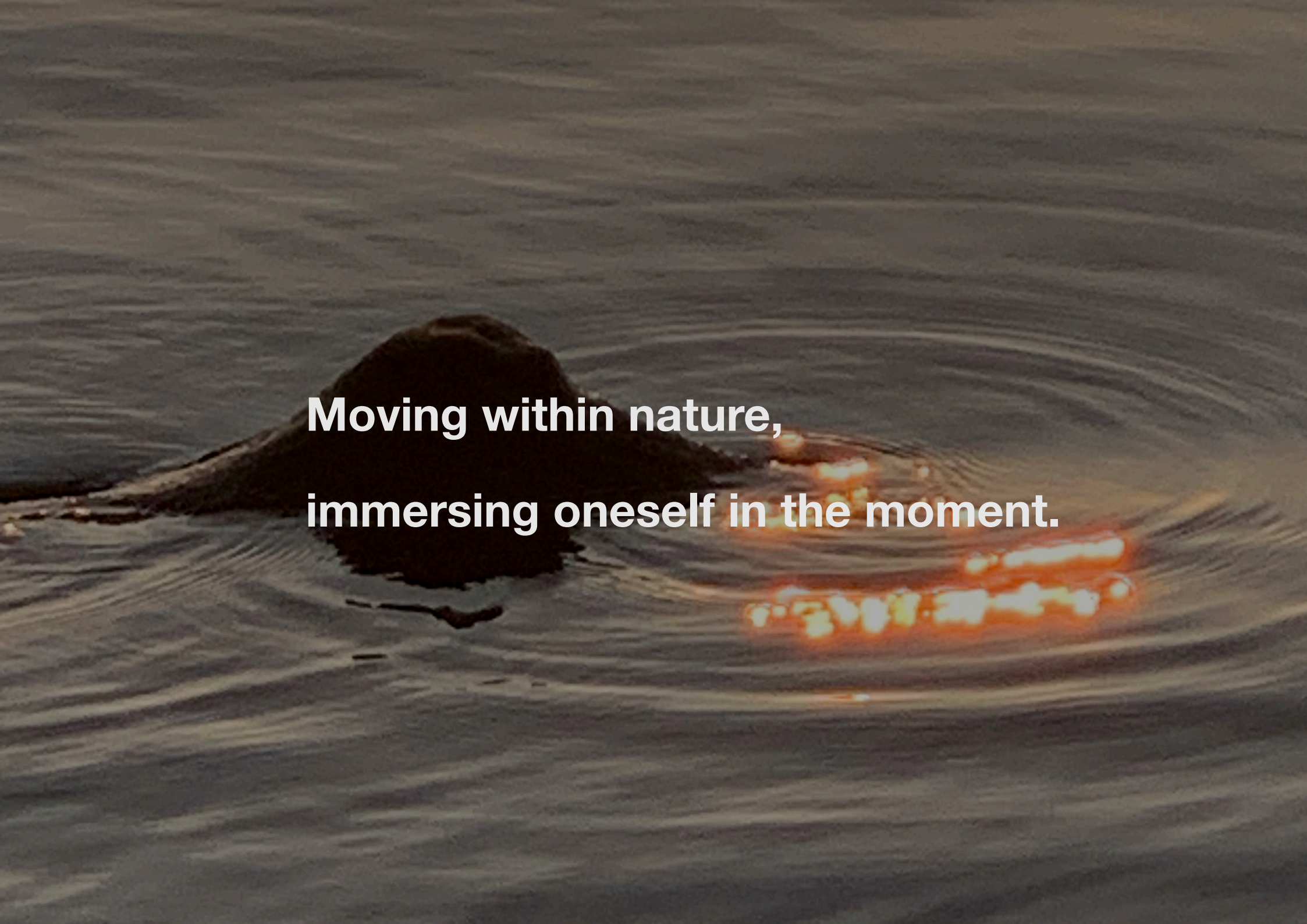
A simple example is how to get from one note to another, how that feels. Different fingers are involved (or not: sliding down from black to white is also a kind of sensory perception). What matters now is that there are intervals, melodies, and chords that I learn to feel. What does a triad feel like, and what does it sound like? It's wonderful when the child is allowed to discover the piano and gain its first insights in a playful way. That could be octave equivalence — recognizing that the keys look the same. But also how tones sound together. The technical terms consonance and dissonance are set aside at first. It's about playful discovery. For example: C–G. Later you learn that this is called a fifth. But now I can simply try out how a chromatic parallel motion upward sounds — and I gain two important experiences. One is that this apparently always, or almost always, involves two white or two black keys that sound so good together. The particular character, the distinctive quality of the sound — in this case the fifth — becomes even clearer when I isolate the interval from its context, as in this example of playful exercise, and simply shift it in parallel motion.

Perhaps the idea arises to alter one note. Now I almost always have white–black, black–white.

Nora is a beginner, playing "Kommt ein Vogel geflogen" and one spot bothers her, namely f–b just before the final note. I asked her what she was hearing and have her play the notes at the same time — she makes a face and finds them terrible. Here she discovered the tritone and tried out what has to follow - she succeeded and was happy.

So let's start from the tritone — one note in the left hand, one in the right: both voices move one step toward each other, inward. And there you already have a wonderful, calming sound, one where you feel at home. So this phenomenon of tension and resolution is what you discover here. Now the other way, outward. And look there: that works too.

Later on you'll see: in one case it's notated as C–G $\flat$ – that means the upper note tends downward. And in the second case it's written as C–F $\sharp$, the upper note tends upward. But that may come later. What matters — since we're talking here about enharmonic interchangeability — is recognizing that this phenomenon exists.

A dark, conical rock formation, possibly a sea stack, rises from the ocean. To the right of the rock, a bright, glowing orange light reflects on the water's surface, creating a shimmering path. The water is dark and textured with ripples.

**Moving within nature,
immersing oneself in the moment.**

When someone begins learning to play the piano, it's a bit like moving within nature: you dive in, you are connected to the moment. This precious moment must be grasped and held.

Music as a means of communication comes in the moment, when a student wants to begin with free playing. I like to begin in a likely free form of improvisation, where I don't prescribe much. I said: „Imagine a note, and I imagine a note too — I wait until I'm given the sign that the note is there in your mind" — and then: „search for it, play it, and then try: what should come after it?“ In any case, intuitive music-making can arise this way — genuine communication from the very start, because it is like a good conversation. Everyone involved needs space, and you have to give it to them.

Here's another example with Till Ole: the only task was to create contrary moods. You still play in alternation, but the themes should not blend together. In this form of improvisation one practices listening to the other, while holding the own material in memory. I prescribe no more than necessary.

Hermann Hesse once said: „I cannot give you what does not exist within you - I can only give you the key. I will help you make your own world visible and audible. That is all.“

One's own experiences of music are totally individual, since the way of hearing is build up even before birth, and from then on everything gets networked in its own unique way. Every brain forms itself, getting an entirely unique structure. So, students should be allowed to find their own concepts and words, so that the insights can really take hold. You can only practice music with genuine self-responsibility, when you are in contact with what is truly your own.

A large, bright sun is positioned in the upper right corner, casting a warm, orange glow across the sky. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a lighter yellow near the sun. In the lower center, a dark silhouette of a flower bud on a thin stem is visible, reaching upwards towards the sun. The text "Freedom and being guided, seeking and perceiving." is overlaid in white, centered horizontally and positioned below the flower bud.

**Freedom and being guided,
seeking and perceiving.**

Claire is an adult, very musical, has had piano lessons for a long time and knows a lot about music theory. But she very quickly feels uncertain. A wrong note creates quick irritation, and she wants or must start over from the beginning. She herself described this as: „a separation of sound and experience and the actual doing“. Ear analysis and using truly her own words were the solution. We worked on a piece of music she didn't yet have in her fingers but knew by ear. In communication with me searching for the notes she succeeded quickly. I gave her complete freedom. If something wasn't right, I didn't show her that. Instead, I let her describe in her own words, what she had experienced with her sense of hearing – so she found wonderful words for melody and rhythm. What matters here: without many words, she was able to connect to her inner musicality, and thus entered onto her own path. This moment is decisive, because even the smallest changes have large effects — and that remains.

So: actually keep to the agreement "ask me if you need help“, not to be tempted into giving instructions anyway, while the other person is completely absorbed in what they're doing.

Chopin, Nocturne F minor op. 55 No. 1

Andante. Op. 55, Nº 1.

p *cantabile*

Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. *

poco animato

cresc. *f* *dim.*

Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. *

riten. *a tempo*

p

Led. * Led. * Led. * Led. *

Pia is playing Chopin's Nocturne in f-minor and reached a spot about which she said: „here I'm not sure, even though I've practiced this a lot and analysed the harmonies.“ Here too, the path forward went through ear analysis and later a feel for the fingering and touch: first of all comparing the melody in measures 1 and 20 (marked in orange), she realised and expressed the difference. Now she had a new connection to the melody - and then she played the chords in the following measures thoroughly. This produced a sense of wonder in her - and ultimately the experimentation and the desire to improvise over some chords arose. She moved freely within this musical passage and enjoyed perceiving this processes.

Last but not least: after the holidays Camilla was looking for a good way into her piece. So I asked her: when you think of this music, what is present: Do you hear the sound? Do you feel your fingers playing it? Do you inwardly see the sheet music? Do you have the image of the keys in front of your eyes? Out of this questioning, clarity and possibilities for action emerged for Camilla. The opposite would have been: me telling her what to see, to hear, to do. But this way, she was given room for her own observations and her inner ear. It immediately became meaningful in terms of sound.

What does praise mean in this context? It is a reflection on what has changed. I only articulate what I have perceived. I also ask what the student has perceived. Openness, versatility, and freedom take place – room for intrinsic learning.

The discovery of slowness

As a teenager I enjoyed playing pieces very slowly at first. To experience, to really live through what's happening there, a slow tempo, or slow down at passages that are important, is far more advantageous.



Mozart's Piano Sonata in C major, K. 545 – middle section of the third movement.

So here we're in A minor, we hear the tonic, then the subdominant D minor. But then: that's where the crucial note appears. What chord do we have there? Normally the minor subdominant with a 6 instead of a 5 would appear here, notated s6, D–F–B. But Mozart doesn't write it that way here; the sixth is lowered to B $\flat$. Hearing and feeling — this particular effect, stylized in the Baroque for pain, sorrow. That is, as you may learn later, the Neapolitan sixth chord, that is, the lowered sixth.

**Feeling moods,
sonic stimuli**

It's very often about feeling a mood. Frequently, in the outer voices of the right hand: suspensions. The most important, most striking note foreign to the harmony on a strong beat is carried onward, usually downward, into another note that is mostly consonant.

Chopin, the first Prélude in C major, Op. 28. Originally a fast piece. But if you play it fast, you don't hear these stimuli, arising from the notes foreign to the harmony, so clearly. Many of them hang, so to speak, in the air and keep floating. Often these are suspensions that resolve downward or sometimes upward. It's so intense to experience this, to feel it, really to play slowly and to vary the tempo.

If one is sufficiently advanced, perhaps consider: what is the actual chord, and which are the foreign notes, so to speak, that don't belong to it?

Chopin, Prélude C major op. 28 No. 1

stretto

The image displays a musical score for Chopin's Prélude C major op. 28 No. 1, specifically measures 14 through 20. The score is written for piano and features a treble and bass staff. The key signature is C major, and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo marking *stretto* is placed above the first staff. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingerings (e.g., 3, 5). The bottom of the page shows a series of rhythmic symbols: a treble clef, a quarter note, and a sixteenth note, followed by a series of asterisks and a final treble clef.

14

20

p

[illegible]

That's where theory comes into play. But theory isn't something merely theoretical — it's a background, a meaning. The explanation is a bit complicated. It is the augmented sixth chord. In English it's called the "German 6/5" for whatever reason. You can see clearly here that this is a six-five chord, built from the bass, but it is augmented, since the outer interval here is not a major or minor sixth, nor a minor seventh, but an augmented sixth. That's the theoretical explanation. But if I start out that way and say to the student: play something like this — that would be rather difficult. You first have to experience it, must see and feel it. Then you can easily do it in any key.

So:

Read attentively!

Play very slowly!

Take it in with all your senses!

Surrender yourself with your whole body!

**Resonance arises through the
collaboration of teacher and student,
and also through making music together –**

**and this is the method, that can then
have an effect on all areas of life.**

A photograph of a whale breaching the water surface. The whale's back and tail are visible above the water, creating a dark silhouette against the lighter, rippling water. The scene is captured in a low-key, moody style, likely during twilight.

**Life in and with music
is not a segment cut out of life –
it is a diving into life.**

**Teaching and immersing within music
means learning to live!**

It is perhaps like being at the bottom of the sea,
where everything has its gently pulsing time, its gently pulsing rhythm.
An inner life with its own laws, its own images, thoughts, feelings.

The polish Nobel Prize winner for literature, Olga Tokarczuk, once said:
“Its inhabitants are in boundless security“.



Thank you very much for listening!

Petra Charlotte Bleser & Martin Pohl-Hesse

**cordamota.eu
pianoforte-musik.de
martin-pohl-hesse.de**

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