

Practice Exaggeration for Large Intervals and Leaps

One technique that helps the pianist overcome difficult leaps is *exaggeration*. Exaggerating a leap in one or both hands is accomplished by making the hand or hands move an additional octave beyond the interval in the score. This makes the music more difficult to play, but when you return to the original part, you may find that your reaction time has quickened somewhat and the original is easier to play. If both hands move together and traverse a large interval, an octave can be added to both intervals. If the hand has to move from one hand position to another hand position, an octave can be added to the shift, giving the same result.

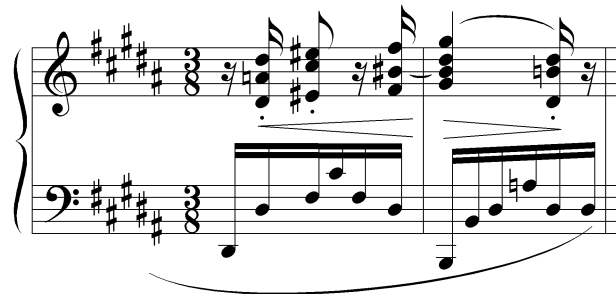
I found the technique useful when practicing an octave leap downward in the right hand in Ravel's *Scarbo*. In the passage, the right hand has an awkward skip from a repeated note (C#5) to C#4 and D4 and then back up to the third and fifth finger for C#5 and F#5:

While the leap is not large, it is somewhat awkward and occurs at a rapid tempo. By practicing the passage after increasing the distance that the right hand travels by one octave (to C#4 and D4, from the repeated note with the grace note figure), the original passage seems a lot easier and more manageable:

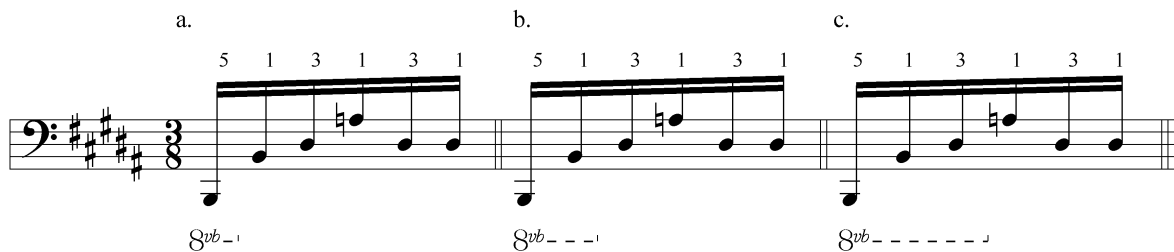
The leap can also be exaggerated further by extending it an additional octave:

I found the technique helpful in improving the accuracy of the fingers in the passage.

Another example of applying the technique to a left hand figure comes from the same piece, in measure 193 (and in measure 197). Measures 192 and 193 are shown below:



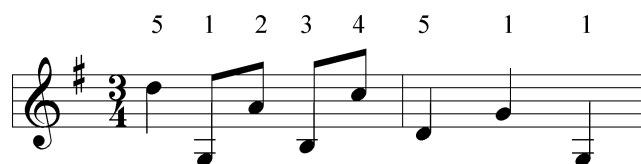
This figure can be practiced by extending each interval in the figure by one octave. This offers three different approaches to practicing the left hand:



The technique of exaggeration can be applied to any piece, regardless of its level of difficulty. Even the relatively easy right hand part in Bach's Minuet in G becomes a challenge when the technique is applied. Here, every other note in the original part is shifted an octave downward:



becomes:



In another variation of the technique, D5 is shifted up an octave to D6:

5 1 2 3 4 5 1 1

Exaggeration can be used to avoid the tension that comes from stretching or reaching for keys rather than moving the hand to position the fingers. For example, in Chopin's Etude Op.10 No.4, exaggeration can be applied to the right hand by shifting various notes up an octave:

As you can see, the technique can be applied in many different ways. With experimentation, it is possible to find the applications that produce the best results for any given passage.