Color My Music! Bring Tonal Color to Repertoire Through a Variety of Touches

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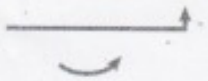
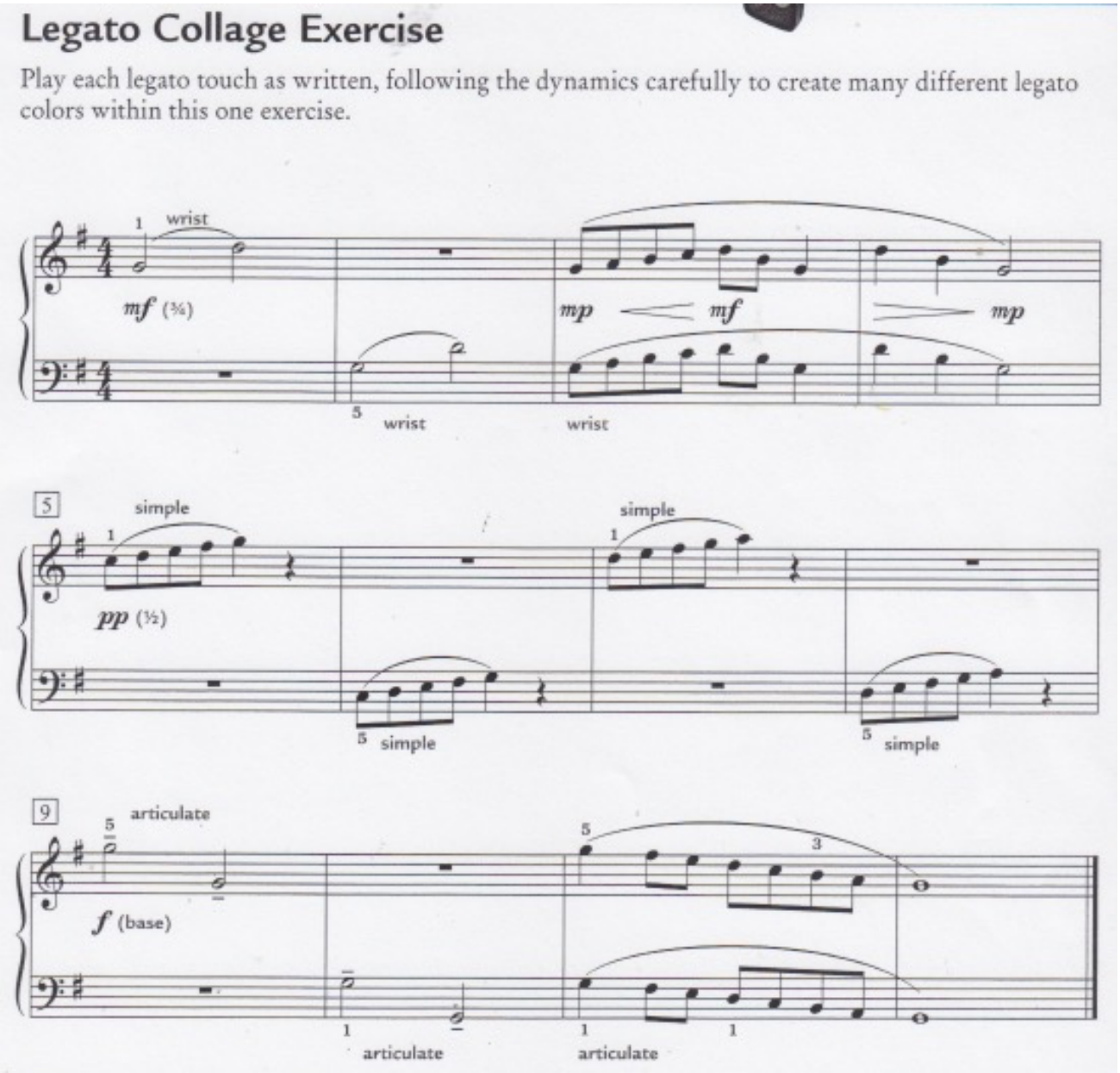
Students can individualize their music with a vocabulary of touches to create vivid tonal colors. Presentation time is limited at the conference so I am including helpful ideas describing the touches you can teach (5 legato, 6 staccato, 5 chordal) with samples of a few exercises at elementary and intermediate levels.

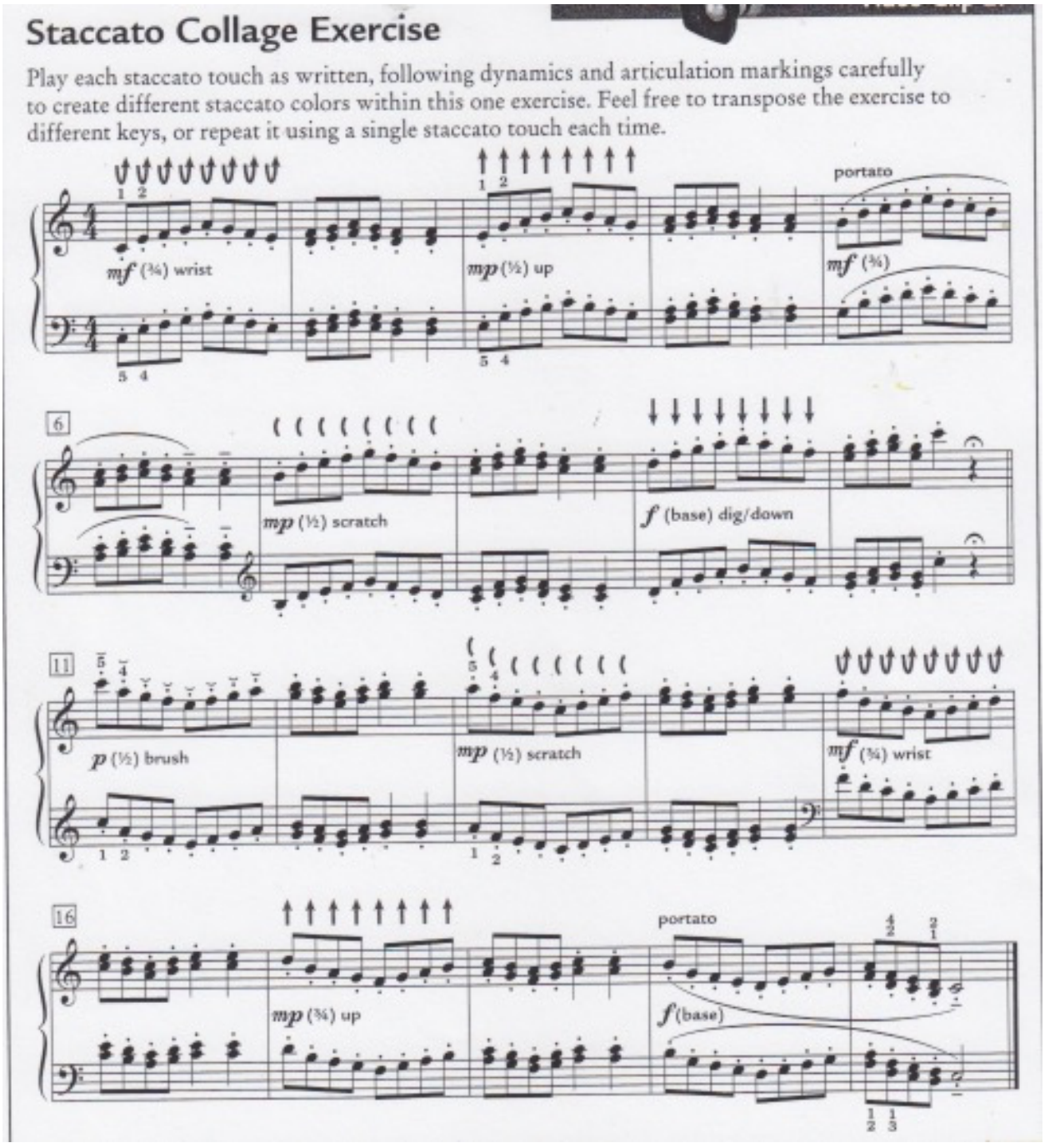
Quick Glance Chart

	TOUCH	DESCRIPTION	MARKING
LEGATO	Rotating Wrist	**Round, melodic tone** Transfer a relaxed arm weight from one finger to the next using a flexible wrist.	
	Simple	**Static, smooth tone** Fingers play lightly into the keys with minimal hand and finger movements. Wrist remains poised, but relaxed.	simple
	Articulate	**Crisp, "fingery" tone** Sharply curved fingers lift above the keys after playing them.	articulate
	Flat-Finger Legato	**Distant, hazy tone** The hand is flat on the keyboard and uses a lateral wrist movement with fingers gently depressing ½ into the keys.	
	Caramel Legato	**Rich, ulta-smooth tone** Hold one note (key) into the next note for a portion of a second using a rotating wrist to create a smooth band of sound.	
STACCATO	Wrist	**Loose, bouncy tone** With a loose, bouncy wrist starting above the key, drop fingers into the key and back up again.	
	Up	**Short, crisp tone** Start on the surface of the key, snapping the wrist upward with a quick movement. "Touch up" quietly plays from ½ into the key. "Grab up" snaps up from the base of the key.	
	Portato	**Sticky, "almost legato" tone** A forward movement of the wrist as fingers slide inward along the key with a poised upward-wrist follow-through.	
	Scratch Staccato	**Quick, clear-cut tone** A quick snap of the finger from the key surface back toward the palm of the hand.	
	Brush Staccato	**Delicate, subtle tone** Finger brush the keys forward or backward, releasing them gently.	
	Dig (Down) Staccato	**Solidly accented and detached tone** Use the forearm to bounce forward (dig) into the key and up again to form an accented tone.	

TOUCH	DESCRIPTION	MARKING
Placed Chord	**Defined, round tone** Play the chord with a forward placement and release of the wrist. "Place hold" stays on the keys. "Place release" has a forward wrist follow-through and release.	
Up Chord	**Crisp, defined staccato tone.** Shape the hand in the position of the chord and snap the wrist upward with a quick movement as you play. "Touch up" from the (key) surfaces, or "grab up" from the base of the keys.	
Toss Chord	**Free and relaxed bouncy tone** With the wrist a bit higher than with the wrist staccato, hang fingers close to the surface of the key, bouncing into the key with less upward wrist movement.	
Shove Chord	**Sharp, aggressive tone** Similar to the place-release chord, use a quicker forward wrist movement and release. "Shove-release" has a follow through release; "shove-hold" keeps the hand in place for the length of the chord.	
Cling Chord	**Round, legato tone** An ultra-smooth tone similar to caramel legato. The hand remains on the surface of the key between chords, transferring weight from one chord to the next to create a continuous legato sound rather than separate released chords.	

Legato Collage Exercise – Elementary Level




Staccato Collage Exercise
Play each staccato touch as written, following dynamics and articulation markings carefully to create different staccato colors within this one exercise. Feel free to transpose the exercise to different keys, or repeat it using a single staccato touch each time.
mf (¾) wrist
mp (½) up
portato
mf (¾)
6
mp (½) scratch
f (base) dig/down
11
p (½) brush
mp (½) scratch
mf (¾) wrist
16
mp (¾) up
portato
f (base)

Chordal Collage Exercise - Intermediate

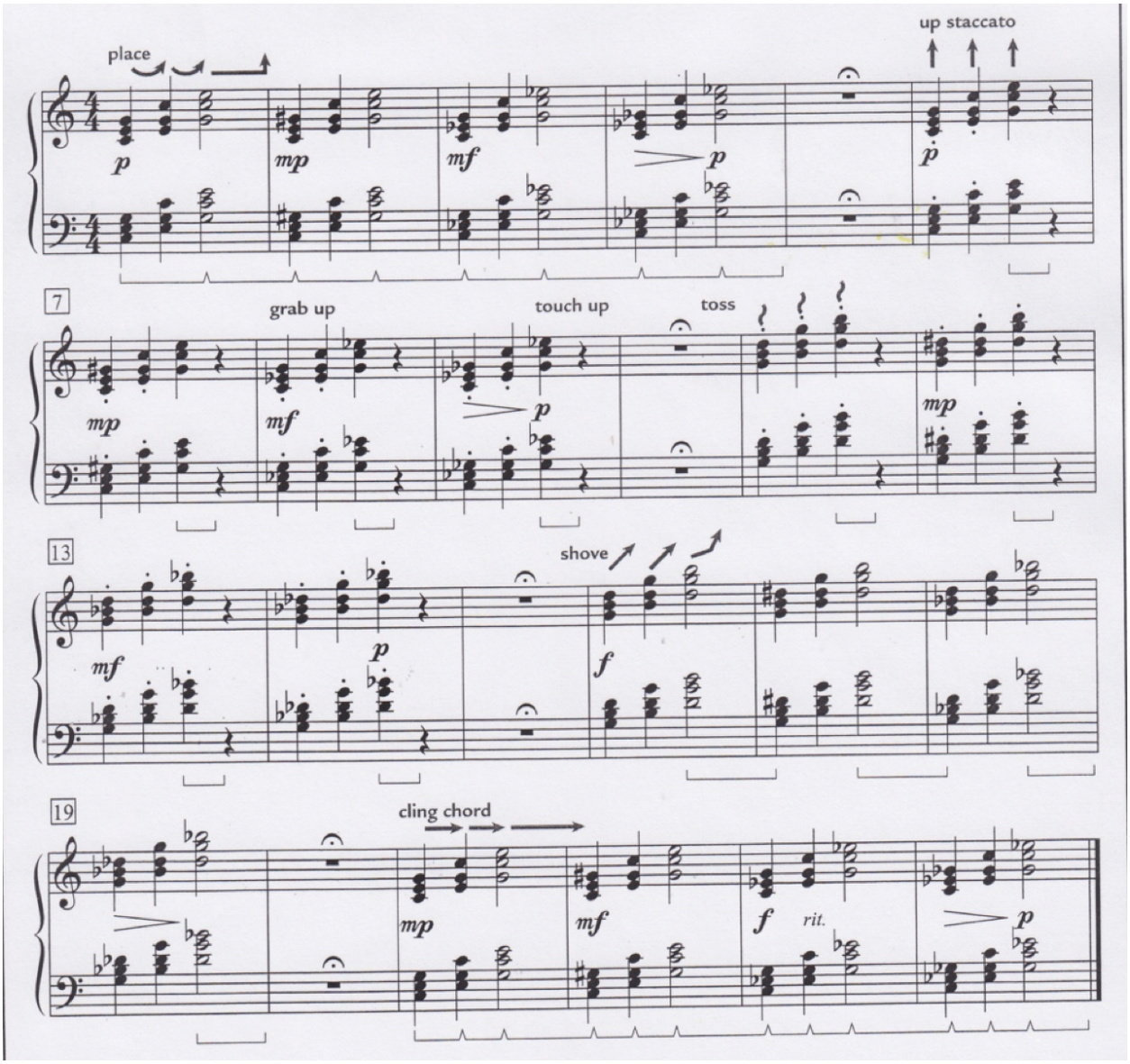


Chart and Exercises from:
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