

PIANO MAGAZINE

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CONNOR CHEE

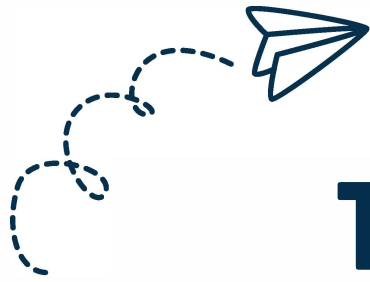


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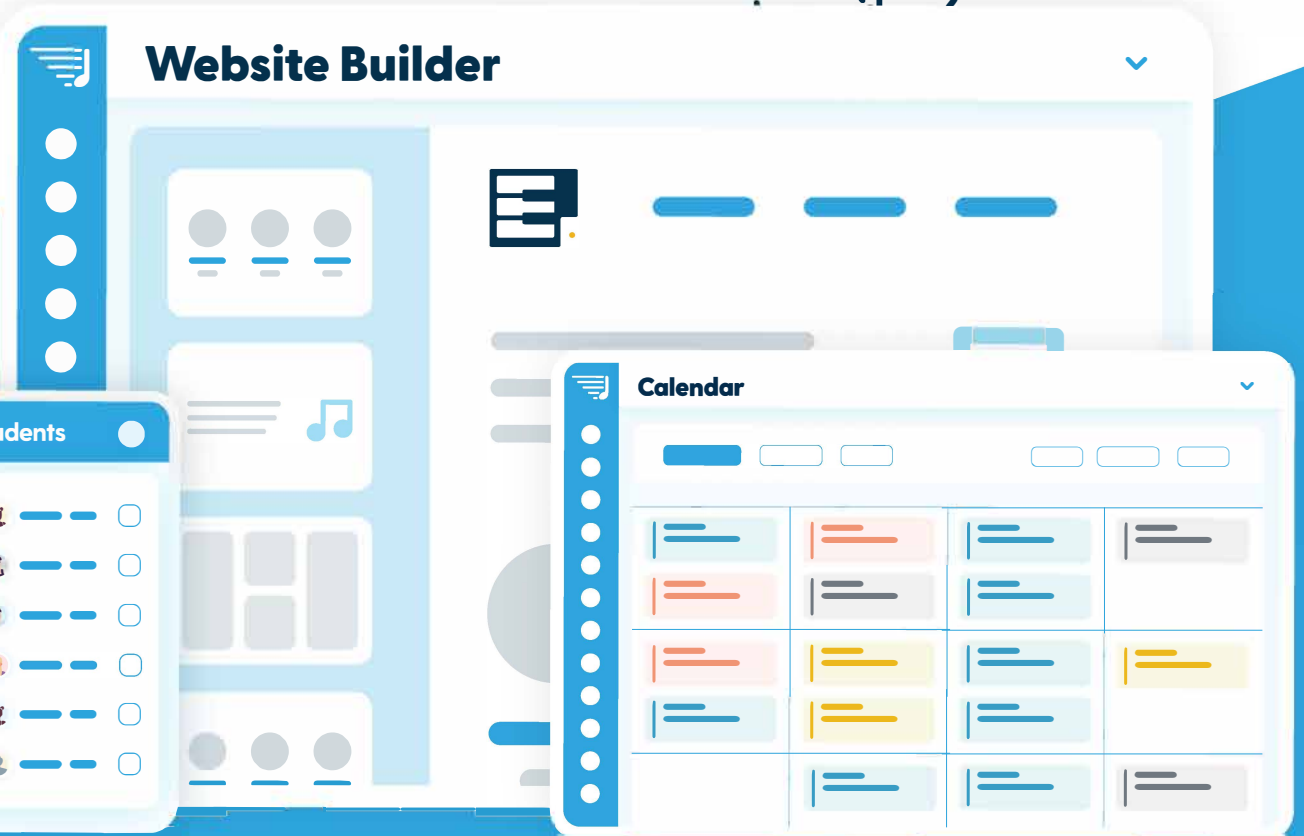
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to this issue.*



– PAMELA D. PIKE
Editor-in-Chief and Chief Content Director

Enhancing Learning by Accommodating Individual Learning Mode Preferences



PAMELA D. PIKE *Editor-in-Chief and Chief Content Director*

The start of each academic year is filled with excitement, joy, and hope—for students and teachers! We begin the year feeling the full range of possibilities: students dream about new and long sought-after challenge pieces that they might learn and perform, while teachers imagine steady progress that will be made weekly as technique is mastered and music is practiced.

Yet, amid the busyness of lesson preparation and anticipation of working with new and returning students, there might be a little trepidation. What if the student doesn't respond to our teaching? What if they fail to master the next piece in the book or on our lesson plan? What if they lose the joy of making music at the piano and progress slows? While there is not a simple solution to these concerns, ensuring that our technical and preparation activities are adapted to meet individual student preferences *does* help with student success, and thus motivation, throughout the year.

While meeting the needs of neurodivergent and gifted students is of utmost importance in the piano lesson, in this column I explore ways to embrace the diverse learning needs of *neurotypical* piano students.¹ First, humans learn via three processing modes (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic). While we avail of each of these modes, to varying degrees during different learning tasks, some people have a preferred mode when encountering new material or when learning challenging music. A teacher who uses well-thought-out activities to prepare a student before they turn the page in the method or repertoire book sets up the student for success by drawing on learners' different and preferred processing mode(s).

For example, in a typical method book and without any preparation activity, a student would encounter a new piece

through visual cues on the page: the musical score, words of explanation, alongside possible pictures and lyrics. For a student who is an auditory learner, the process of reading and translating the text and notation may be cumbersome. Teachers often supplement or circumvent reading the text with in-lesson verbal explanations; this may assist the auditory learner as they make meaning of the music. Likewise, hearing a performance of the piece further helps the auditory learner by hearing an aural depiction *before* seeing the music. While seeing and hearing new music is helpful, kinesthetic learners benefit from *experiencing* the music through touch and feel. This is why preparatory movement activities, including feeling the keys under the fingers while exploring new notes, are helpful as kinesthetic learners work out the notes and musical meaning. Students whose teachers have prepared them for the next piece through all three learning modes are likely to experience success and satisfaction when working on new music in the method book.

For intermediate-level pieces, such as the first movement of the Haydn *Sonata in G Major*, Hob. XVI: G1, preparatory technical exercises undertaken in the weeks leading up to the introduction of the sonata might prepare students aurally, kinesthetically, and visually for the actual notes on the page. For example, technical exercises in the RH might include the important descending five-note scale with the quick octave hand-expansion to a third with fingers three and five, where the top note must be voiced. (See Excerpt 1.) In addition to feeling and hearing this motive starting on various pitches of the G major scale, students could also experience and internalize the pulse of the descending thirty-second-note anacrusis and subsequent octave expansion in eighths.



EXCERPT 1
Haydn *Sonata in G Major*,
Hob. XVI:G1, first mv.,
mm. 1-6.

Similarly, rehearsing LH descending scales gives students physical experience with thumb cross-unders and practicing broken-intervals allows students time to experiment with the rocking motion and voicing at quick *tempi* (Excerpt 2). As triplet scales feature prominently in this movement, practicing scales in various rhythmic groupings is another technical preparation that allows pianists to explore and refine technique, rhythmic pulse, and musical shaping via auditory and kinesthetic modes without being encumbered by the visual notation. Once students see the score, many link both sound and physical gesture to groupings of notes on the page, enabling a more musical performance from the outset and often better listening during practice. For students who prefer having visual cues from the start, a focus on how the hands look on the keyboard and seeing snippets of the music they are playing is helpful and reassuring during preparation activities.



EXCERPT 2
Haydn *Sonata in G Major*,
Hob. XVI:G1, mm. 15–18,
left hand.

Regardless of how you prepare your students for upcoming musical challenges this year, consider employing all three processing modes to engage all learners in your studio.

NOTES

¹ The term “neurodiversity” came into use in 1997 and 1998. It is often attributed to Judy Singer who wrote about it in her honors thesis in 1998 and a later book: Judy Singer, *Neurodiversity: The Birth of an Idea* (Self-published, 2016). Neurodiversity recognizes that while all brains are different, those who are neurodivergent process information differently from the neurotypical person. It allows teachers to appreciate variances in brain functioning as opportunities, strengths, and differences rather than as a disability or deficiency. Pedagogues argue that employing inclusive pedagogy makes the instruction better for all learners. Excellent resources for music teachers who work with neurodivergent students include: Alice M. Hammel and Ryan M. Hourigan, *Teaching Music to Students with Special Needs: A Label-Free Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Tim Cain and Joanna Cursley, *Teaching Music Differently* (New York: Routledge, 2017). Similarly, gifted children process information differently from typical peers in their age group and benefit from inclusive pedagogies. Resources include: Lesley McAllister, “Why is My Gifted Student Struggling? Character Traits, Common Misdiagnoses and Teaching Strategies for Gifted and Twice Exceptional Piano Students,” *MTNA e-Journal 13* (no. 2): 2–15; Joanne Haroutounian, *Kindling the Spark: Recognizing and Developing Musical Talent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); James R. Delisle, *Understanding Your Gifted Child from the Inside Out: A Guide to the Social and Emotional Lives of Gifted Kids* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

Regardless of how you prepare students for upcoming musical challenges this year, consider employing all three processing modes to engage all learners in your studio.

In addition to considering preparation activities for your students, one of the articles in this issue of the *Piano Magazine* provides ideas into how humor in Haydn’s music can be used to engage piano students throughout the learning and music-making process. Our feature articles highlight the compositions, recordings, and projects of Connor Chee, and Chee provides insight into how to break harmful stereotypes associated with Indigenous music, including his own Diné (Navajo) culture. Our recording reviews feature a look at a recent documentary about H el ene Grimaud, and we have many ideas for music and recital programming as you plan the year ahead. We hope you enjoy reading and revisiting the Autumn 2024 *Piano Magazine* in the coming weeks and months. 📖

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CONNOR CHEE

*Honoring Tradition
and Embracing Possibility
at the Piano*

By Pamela D. Pike and Craig Sale



Photos by Mary Beth Crandall, courtesy of Connor Chee.

The more time I spend at the piano, the more I am amazed by the possibility of this one instrument. At first glance it may be limiting because there are only so many keys, but it's really kind of limitless. We are still coming up with new ideas and music. Then, that music can become part of someone else, with different technique and experiences, when they sit at the instrument.

(Connor Chee, paraphrased, July 2023)¹

Formative Classical Piano Training

At first glance, pianist and composer, Connor Chee, is exemplary due to his impeccable musical pedigree synonymous with accomplished pianists that have gone before him—Classical training and confidence that earned him a gold medal and Carnegie Hall debut at the age of twelve, then degrees from the Eastman School of Music and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. But Chee's success was neither guaranteed nor probable. His is a story of passion for Classical music nurtured by family support, perseverance in the face of stereotypes, dedication to craft, and intention to embrace ancestral roots throughout his musical journey. At age thirty-six, Chee's story is far from over, but it is one worth discovering and highlighting as we await new music, recordings, and projects from this trailblazer and role model for all generations of pianists.

Chee was born into the Navajo Nation in Page, Arizona, and was intrigued by music from an early age. He recalls spending hours tinkering on a small keyboard that was a gift to his father. Noting Chee's interest in the keyboard, his supportive parents sacrificed to purchase an acoustic piano for his first years of lessons with Sue Barney and Debbie Mitchell in Page, Arizona. From age eight to ten, Chee's parents drove him four hours roundtrip for lessons in Flagstaff. Due to his propensity for the instrument and quick development during his early Classical training, he was encouraged to audition for the School for the Creative and Performing Arts in Cincinnati, Ohio. He was accepted and studied with Anna Weinstein and Simon Goykhman there. His family's decision to leave their supportive Diné (Navajo) community and relocate to Ohio so Chee could attend the school was well-founded as just two years later he won the Young Artist Division of the World Piano Competition. This, and subsequent competition awards, earned him the opportunity to debut at Carnegie Hall and perform at the United Nations, as well as with the Cincinnati Pops, the Hamilton-Fairfield Symphony Orchestra (now the Butler Philharmonic), and the Blue Ash/Montgomery Symphony Orchestras as a teenager. Chee's piano training continued as he studied with Rebecca Penneys at Eastman for his Bachelor of Music and with Elizabeth Pridonoff for his Master of Music

*...cultural stereotypes persisted,
and [Chee] heard that
he might “not be disciplined
enough to be a pianist”
due to his heritage.*




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“What started as setting a few melodies actually turned into composing some original things, and reaching back into that part of me that wanted to compose since I was a child.”



degree at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music. His performing success continued in the competition world after graduation with a first-prize win in the 2016 Bradshaw & Buono International Piano Competition.

Even with his success, Chee did not have any role models or accurate representations of his culture in the Classical piano world and faced some discrimination from certain teachers. He notes that cultural stereotypes persisted, and he heard that he might “not be disciplined enough to be a pianist” due to his heritage. He even recalls feeling a derogatory tone in the writings and descriptions of Indigenous music by ethnomusicologists of the time. However, Chee had one teacher who asked the students to find some music by a composer from their background and share it with classmates. For Chee, this one small assignment may have opened the door to his unique pathway forward in the music profession. What Chee realized during this time was that there were few examples, especially in the piano literature, of Navajo music. While he didn't expect to compose or record music while in college, his recognition that children and pianists (from all cultures) did not have “accurate representations of living, modern Indigenous Peoples” revealed and focused his professional path to include composing for pianists of all ages, recording personal and meaningful music, and serving as a role model.

Returning to His Roots to Find His Musical Voice

Beginning early in Chee's life, one of his greatest musical influences was the music sung to him by his grandfather. Often, the text of origin and creation stories was set to music. Children learned these stories and the music by hearing them sung over and over by elders and by participating in the experience. These traditional songs and the dances that accompanied them were an important part of life, along with the other music he heard on the radio and on records. And yet, it wasn't until after completing his master's degree that he began exploring ways to help preserve this music which, because it comes from an oral tradition, could be so easily lost. He struggled with the fact that traditional singers do not use written music and his attempts to write it down ran contrary to the tradition of sharing and passing things down orally through the generations. As he explored adding harmony, Chee's preservation project turned into something else. “What started as setting a few melodies actually turned into composing some original things, and reaching back into that part of me that wanted to compose since I was a child.” He began to look for ways to take traditional music, stories, and other parts of Diné (Navajo) culture and embed it in his music.

Chee explains that in Diné culture:

There are songs for riding your horse or when you're weaving, but there are also ceremonial songs. The music sort of permeates all these different spaces. Part of the oral tradition is because the Navajo people believe in the power of music. So, these sacred songs that are only for ceremony—they shouldn't be shared outside of that. There are also songs that are for certain times of the year. I try to be really cognizant of all of those things, when I'm including music that I know is going to be streaming or going to be played anytime of the year, or in any space. I do my best to find things that are going to be respectful, and not overshare things that shouldn't be shared outside of the community.

Chee has recorded three acclaimed albums of original pieces and piano transcriptions of Navajo music. *The Navajo Piano* won Best Instrumental Recording at the Sixteenth Annual Native American Music Awards. The albums reflect his deep understanding and need to compose authentic and personal music. In the last ten years, Connor has shared his music through live performance, recordings, publications, and video. In 2020,



Chee performing at Carnegie Hall

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“I’m always surprised at the conversations that open up with people from other cultures and things that I’ve learned about from other people, because they found something in the music that relates to Diné culture and that also relates to some aspect of their unique background.”



he and longtime friend Michael Etcitty Jr. created a series of music videos presenting his *Scenes from Dinetah* collection. Filmed on a reservation in northern Arizona, these poetic multimedia expressions of Navajo culture feature daily life and Connor playing the piano in beautiful desert settings.² In 2021, he published the music heard on his successful recording, *The Navajo Piano*, and this last year he published the score for *Scenes from Dinetah*. He shares that the pieces he performs and records reside very clearly in his mind so there is no need to write them down. However, Chee explains that he “began writing these down for others *only* after the albums were released and people requested notation of the music.”

Current Work and Looking to the Future

The Frances Clark Center has been working with Chee and Diné pianist and musicologist, Renata Yazzie, in creating a collection of pieces by Indigenous composers for elementary students—*Weaving Sounds*.³ The book contains pieces by ten Indigenous composers from across the United States and Canada, representing seven different tribal communities. It also contains information about the composer and their community providing critical cultural context for students. Connor explains the importance of this:

There are 574 federally recognized tribes in the United States. That’s something a lot of people don’t realize—different languages, different cultures. There are certainly things that are shared across the cultures, but there are also very interesting and unique identities. What people don’t realize is what also makes us unique—the different languages, different customs, and things like that.

Specifically in the Indigenous communities, I think it’s important because it shows possibility. They’re seeing things that are placed in front of them, and they can say, “Hey, maybe I want to do this someday. Maybe I want to be a composer. Maybe I want to play piano.” It is important for students to see that there is a place for them if they want to pursue music or any other avenue in it.

Chee hopes that in encountering the music in *Weaving Sounds*, Native and Indigenous children will have a visible model and envision pathways to participating in music making and music creation. He views education and communication as important outcomes of the project. He believes that education happens as children and adults experience music created by composers from Indigenous communities and learn about various Indigenous cultures. He hopes that we will learn to understand each other in more meaningful ways. With respect to communication, he says:

I'm always surprised at the conversations that open up with people from other cultures and things that I've learned about from other people, because they found something in the music that relates to Diné culture and that also relates to some aspect of their unique background. Those are the conversations that are so important to celebrate as they represent the diversity that makes everybody unique and that we each bring to the table.



Living in the Moment while Looking Ahead

Chee notes that he used to look to the “future with fear” as he felt that “there was no clear path” for him in the Classical music world to which he had devoted so much of his time and energy. He discovered that only by stepping off of the sought-after Classical career path, was he able to “embrace possibility.” Based on current and past experiences, he now views the unknown future as “exciting.” Like many of us, he works to balance maintaining a certain degree of structure and specificity about career goals with being open to change and unforeseen opportunities in music and creativity. Chee has much to teach us about allowing our personal and cultural histories to nurture our passion and creativity at the piano in the present. 📖

NOTES

¹ Quotes and content for this article are taken from interviews conducted with Connor Chee by Leah Claiborne (*Piano Teaching through the Lens of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, March 2024) and Craig Sale (*Piano Inspires Podcast*, recorded July 2023). Quotes and content have been edited and condensed for clarity.

² To view *Scenes from Dinetah*, please follow this YouTube link: youtube.com/watch?v=iPAkg7jGKwU&list=PLDqgyEhcFMjars-3BALquFesF6zPbMUKPo (Editor's note: this link redirects to external content that is neither created nor maintained by *Piano Magazine* or The Frances Clark Center. Please access with caution.)

³ *Weaving Sounds: Elementary Piano Pieces by Native and Indigenous Composers* will be published this fall by The Frances Clark Center's Piano Education Press.



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BREAKING STEREOTYPES

Understanding the True Diversity
of Indigenous Music

By Connor Chee

Twelve years ago, while working on my master's degree in music, I was also teaching piano. I worked for a company that offered in-home lessons and was assigned two new students—a brother and sister. I pulled up to their home in my Ford Focus, exchanged a few words with their mom, and then sat down to start teaching. Only about five minutes into the younger brother's lesson, he stopped and asked me, "What are you?"

I was confused by his question at first. Before I could even respond, he continued, “Are you Chinese?”

His older sister immediately interjected, “No. Obviously, he’s Black.”

After a slight chuckle, I said, “Actually, I’m Native American. I’m Navajo.”

The little boy was perplexed. “You mean an Indian? That’s not possible. All the Indians are dead.”

“That’s not true,” I responded. “There are many different tribes all across the country today.”

“But you drove here in a car. You didn’t ride a horse. Do you even have a bow and arrow?”

This encounter was just one of many that made me realize how deeply ingrained misconceptions and stereotypes about Native American culture are. As a Diné (Navajo) pianist and composer, I’ve encountered numerous instances where people’s expectations of Indigenous music were rooted in outdated and often inaccurate ideas.

Not only can these expectations be harmful, but they can also limit understanding and appreciation of the wide-ranging musical traditions across Indigenous communities. These misconceptions need to be challenged and our minds opened to the vast and evolving world of Indigenous music. My goal is to address some of these misconceptions, and advocate for removing expectations for Indigenous music, allowing it to be appreciated in its full, diverse complexity.

Misconceptions

Growing up on and around the Navajo Nation, my early exposure to music was deeply rooted in our traditions. Some of my first musical experiences were my grandfather singing traditional Diné songs to me before I could even speak. But as I began to explore music beyond my community, I realized how limited and often inaccurate the general perception of Indigenous music was. Many people I encountered had a narrow and simplistic view, often shaped by movies, books, and school curricula that didn’t do justice to the rich diversity of our musical heritage.

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A prevalent misconception is that Indigenous peoples are a cultural monolith, and all their music comes from the same place. In reality, each tribe has developed its own distinct musical language, reflecting a rich tapestry of diversity and complexity. Although Indigenous music has often been portrayed as simplistic compared to Western European traditions, this is far from the truth. Indigenous music is characterized by intricate rhythms, a variety of instruments, and diverse vocal styles that contribute to its profound richness. I've incorporated these elements into my own compositions, blending them with classical piano to create a fusion that honors both traditional roots and modern influences.

When it comes to modern or contemporary sound, it's a mistake to think that Indigenous music is solely traditional or ceremonial. Many Indigenous musicians are blending contemporary influences into their work, creating innovative and avant-garde music. Artists like The Halluci Nation are a perfect example; they fuse electronic music with traditional sounds, producing tracks that are fresh and exciting. In my own work, I strive to balance respect for tradition with a desire to innovate, showing that our music is alive and evolving.

Balancing Cultural Identity with Artistic Expression

My journey as a Diné musician has been both challenging and rewarding. When I completed my master's degree, I had the idea to try and find a way to preserve the music I had heard my grandfather sing and perform when I was growing up. Our language and music are passed down orally, and traditionally are not written down. When I decided to compose my first album, *The Navajo Piano*, I never thought it would be more than a personal project to preserve my family's music traditions. I now have had the privilege of recording five albums of my music and I get to perform for a diverse array of communities. Each performance is an opportunity to share a piece of my culture with the world and to challenge the audience's preconceived notions about Indigenous music.

Being an Indigenous composer is about navigating the balance between cultural identity and artistic expression. Some Indigenous composers prefer not to be labeled as such to avoid being pigeonholed. While cultural background influences everyone, not every composition by

an Indigenous artist must reflect Indigenous elements. It's crucial to allow Indigenous composers the freedom to create on their own terms, without external expectations dictating their work.

For me, my Diné heritage is a source of inspiration, but it doesn't define every piece I compose. Some works are deeply rooted in Navajo traditions, while others explore themes and styles that have no direct connection to my cultural background. This freedom to explore and create without constraints is essential for artistic growth and authenticity.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my career has been working with young musicians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Through workshops and masterclasses, I encourage them to explore the full range of musical possibilities without being constrained by stereotypes. These experiences reaffirm my belief in the power of music to bridge cultural divides and foster mutual respect.

As music educators, we have a responsibility to approach Indigenous music with an open mind and a willingness to learn. It's essential to carefully vet your sources and conduct thorough research on the music you plan to introduce. Just as we delve into the historical and cultural contexts of composers like Mozart and Beethoven to fully appreciate their works, we should apply the same level of inquiry to the music from other cultures. By understanding and incorporating the cultural and historical contexts of the music we teach, we can provide a more respectful and accurate representation of diverse musical traditions.

By incorporating a diverse range of Indigenous music into our curricula, we can expose students to the full spectrum of Indigenous musical traditions. This not only broadens their musical horizons but also helps to dismantle the stereotypes and misconceptions that persist. This understanding fosters greater respect for Indigenous cultures and supports the authentic expression of Indigenous musicians. In my journey as a Navajo composer and pianist, I've found that challenging these expectations not only enriches my own musical experience but also opens a world of possibilities for my students and audiences. By breaking down these barriers, we can all gain a deeper appreciation for the incredible diversity of Indigenous music and the cultures it represents.



Understanding Cultural Appropriation

It is crucial to recognize that even with the best intentions, well-meaning efforts can still cause harm if not executed properly. Understanding the nuances and potential pitfalls is essential to ensure that our actions are genuinely beneficial and respectful. When non-Indigenous artists borrow elements of Indigenous music without understanding their significance, it often results in disrespect and erasure of the original context. A good example of that is the Indianist movement in American classical music that emerged between the 1880s and 1920s. The movement aimed to create a new national music by blending Indigenous musical ideas with Western principles. While the intent might have been to honor Indigenous culture, imposing Western norms on Indigenous music leads to cultural appropriation.

The Sun Dance ceremony, a central practice for tribes like the Oceti Sakowin and Ojibwe, is a great example of the importance of cultural significance and erasure of original context. In 1883, the US government banned the Sun Dance and other traditional Native American religious practices with The Code of Indian Offenses—this remained in effect for nearly a century. During this time, composer Alberto Bimboni created the opera *Winona*, which included Sun Dance chants and songs.¹ President Warren G. Harding, a strong supporter of the opera, advocated for its public performance during his presidency, and in 1926, it finally reached the stage.² Two years later, Bimboni was honored with the Bispham Memorial Medal Award for his contributions in promoting American opera. So, despite the ban on Indigenous communities practicing their rituals, these repurposed elements were celebrated and awarded in mainstream American culture. The contrast between how Indigenous practices were treated versus their adapted forms in Western art is stark and troubling. Understanding cultural appropriation is vital for respecting the significance of cultural elements and honoring their origins.

Summary

Removing expectations for Indigenous music is crucial in fostering a more accurate and respectful understanding of its rich diversity. Often, Indigenous music is mistakenly seen through a lens of uniformity or exoticism, which overlooks the unique characteristics and cultural significance of different traditions. By addressing these misconceptions and presenting Indigenous music as multifaceted and deeply rooted in cultural contexts, we help dismantle the narrow stereotypes that persist. This approach allows us to appreciate Indigenous music for its own merits rather than through the distorted filters of preconceived notions.



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Misconceptions and stereotypes about Indigenous music can cause significant harm by perpetuating a one-dimensional view of these rich traditions. When music is reduced to simplistic or inaccurate representations, it diminishes the cultural value and historical depth of Indigenous practices. Such stereotypes can lead to disrespectful appropriation or trivialization, undermining the profound connections between music, identity, and heritage within Indigenous communities. By actively working to challenge and correct these misconceptions, we not only honor the true essence of Indigenous music but also contribute to a broader cultural understanding that respects and values diversity. ▮

(Editor's Note: In our next issue, Connor Chee will discuss examples of Indigenous music being created today.)

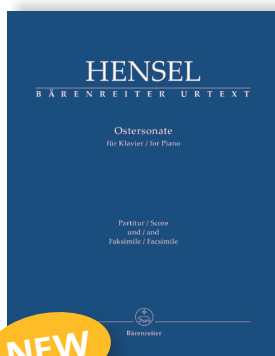
NOTES

- ¹ Gretchen Peters, "The Significance of 'Real Indians' in the Minneapolis Performance of *Winona*," in *Essays from Intersections/Intersezioni 2017 - ICAMus Session* (ICAMus & Intersections, 2017): 7.
- ² John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music: Three Hundred Years of It* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1939): 452.



CONNOR CHEE is a Diné (Navajo) composer and pianist known for blending classical music with traditional Navajo elements. His award-winning works, featured globally, showcase his cultural heritage and technical mastery. He is also dedicated to music education and cultural preservation, inspiring the next generation of musicians.

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NOT SO Serious!



Humor and Hijinks in Haydn's Piano Sonatas

By Sean Schulze

For many younger students, classical piano study is associated with words like discipline, repetition, practice, precision, and perseverance. The capacity of the classical tradition to convey humor, to be lighthearted and fun, and to engage in hijinks and musical pranks is a characteristic less familiar. Introducing our students to this vital aspect of music making is beneficial and necessary. Not only does it counterbalance the more serious aspects of classical piano study, but it also gives our students a fuller picture of this tradition's ability to convey the totality of the human condition and to have some fun while doing so! Few composers are better suited to this endeavor than Franz Josef Haydn.

Background

Born in 1732 and living longer than most of his contemporaries,¹ Haydn witnessed a remarkable evolution in musical style during his lifetime, including the establishment of the multi-movement solo keyboard sonata. Equally important was a transition away from the "learned" counterpoint frequently favored by the Baroque composers and an embrace of the virtues associated with the *galant*.

While the term *galant* carries with it many connotations during the eighteenth century, central to this aesthetic was a desire to be pleasing, witty, and agreeable.² Haydn was employed by the wealthy Esterhazy family for much of his professional life and sought to please and entertain his patrons with music that included a variety of affects. His keyboard sonatas, the majority of which were written during his employment by the Esterhazys, encompass music of classical beauty and are comprised of drama propelled by *sturm und drang* elements as well as the refinement of the *empfindsamkeit stil*.

Not to be overlooked, however, is the element of humor which weaves its way prominently through many of these works and no doubt pleased and amused his students and listeners alike.³ It is perhaps the latter aspect of Haydn's writing that sets him apart from most of his contemporaries. His ability to incorporate humor, hijinks, and musical pranks into the fabric of his compositions is one of his signature achievements and helps establish his keyboard sonatas as landmark works within the genre.

Teaching Haydn Piano Sonatas

An important benefit in teaching this repertoire to pre-college students is their technical accessibility, making many of these works suitable for late-intermediate or early-advanced players. While Haydn was a serviceable keyboardist, a contrast can be drawn with his two great contemporaries, W. A. Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven, both of whom were renowned public virtuosos and whose keyboard repertoire frequently imposes technical hurdles that can be challenging for developing players.⁴

Haydn's keyboard sonatas are by no means easy, and some are indeed outwardly virtuosic, such as Hob. XVI: 50 and Hob. XVI: 52. However, many of his works are at an appropriate level for players who have traversed the sonatina repertoire by Clementi, Kuhlau, Diabelli, and others. This is corroborated by Jane Magrath's *The Pianists Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* which identifies multiple Haydn sonatas for students in the late-intermediate and early-advanced stages.⁵

Dotted Rhythms and Grace Notes

One of the Haydn sonatas best suited to a student graduating from sonatina repertoire is *Sonata in C Major*, Hob. XVI: 35. The very opening of this work displays trademark characteristics associated with Haydn's ability to convey humor. From the outset, a dotted rhythm lends itself to a lighthearted approach in contrast to the more straightforward possibility of two plain eighth notes serving as an upbeat. But the prank is found at the end of the measure where a grace note and a surprising *fz*, out of place on a traditionally weak part of the measure, establish an atmosphere that is funny and comical. Playing this passage at first without the dotted rhythm, grace note, and *fz* dynamic is a great tool to prepare our student's ears for the humor of this passage when fully realized.



FIGURE 1
Franz Josef Haydn,
Sonata in C Major,
Hob. XVI: 35, I.
Allegro con brio,
mm. 1-4.

Similar procedures are found in countless other sonatas by Haydn. Note the prominence of dotted-rhythm figurations in the opening movements of Hob. XVI: 23, Hob. XVI: 39, and Hob. XVI: 41, to name but a few.

Sometimes, grace notes are withheld at first, only to be included later with a clearly humorous effect. One such example would be the first movement of Hob. XVI: 49. At the conclusion of the exposition of the first movement, a four-note, fate-like motive appears (Figure 2). This motive then reappears during the development but with a much more somber vein (Figure 3). When the equivalent passage returns in the recapitulation, however, grace notes are added. This, along with the surprise appearance of a *forte* dynamic, sweeps aside all the pathos remaining from the development and constitutes one of Haydn's trademark musical pranks (Figure 4).

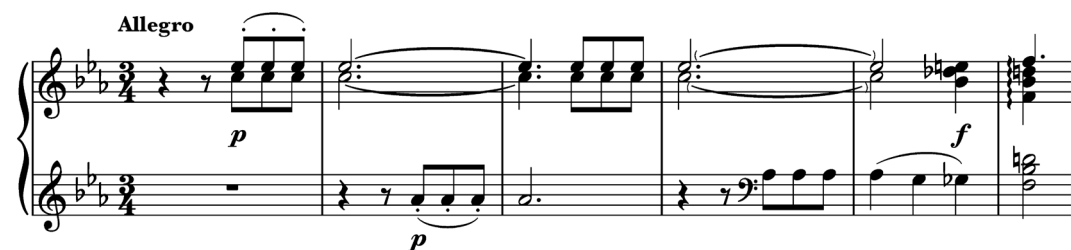


FIGURE 2
Franz Josef Haydn,
Sonata in E-flat
Major, Hob. XVI:
49, I. Allegro,
mm. 53-58.

Allegro

FIGURE 3
Franz Josef Haydn,
Sonata in E-flat
Major, Hob. XVI:
49, I. Allegro, mm.
108–116.

Allegro

FIGURE 4
Franz Josef Haydn,
Sonata in E-flat
Major, Hob. XVI:
49, I. Allegro,
mm. 179–184.

Silence, Suspense, and Surprise

It is helpful to bear in mind that Haydn was writing many of these works at a time when the instruments available to him were able to create dynamic contrast unavailable to generations prior. Haydn exploits this capability to great effect, frequently with a clear comedic intention. There are few better examples than *Sonata in G Major*, Hob. XVI: 40. This work includes several instances of dynamic extremes, with the inclusion of *ff* or *pp* on multiple occasions. At the end of the first movement, Haydn surprises the listener with an unexpected *forte* chord to conclude the movement. Here, the prank is to lull us into believing that the movement will conclude gently and quietly, only for the unsuspecting listener to be startled by a fully voiced chord played *forte*.

Allegretto e innocente

FIGURE 5
Franz Josef Haydn,
Sonata in G Major,
Hob. XVI: 40, I.
Allegretto e innocente,
mm. 97–100.

In the second movement of this work, the use of grace notes, big leaps, and dynamic extremes create a sense of musical hijinks and should be performed in a way that avoids any semblance of seriousness. Here, the atmosphere is laden instead with mischief and good-natured humor.

Presto

FIGURE 6
Franz Josef Haydn,
Sonata in G Major,
Hob. XVI: 40, II.
Presto, mm. 8–10.

Later in this same movement, Haydn employs silence and sudden dynamic contrast to preserve the playful and humorous mood, with some suspense added to the mix courtesy of the unexpected silences.

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Presto

The musical score for Figure 7 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system is marked 'Presto' and shows a piano (p) section with a dynamic shift to forte (f) in the second measure. The second system continues the piece, showing a piano (p) section with a dynamic shift to forte (f) in the second measure.

FIGURE 7
Franz Josef Haydn,
Sonata in G Major,
Hob. XVI: 40, II.
Presto, mm. 17–22.

A similar interplay between silence, suspense, and dynamic surprise can be found in *Sonata in E-flat Major*, Hob. XVI: 52, in the final movement.

Presto

The musical score for Figure 8 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system is marked 'Presto' and shows a piano (p) section with a dynamic shift to forte (f) in the second measure. The second system continues the piece, showing a piano (p) section with a dynamic shift to forte (f) in the second measure.

FIGURE 8
Franz Josef Haydn,
Sonata in E-flat
Major, Hob. XVI:
52, III. Finale-Presto,
mm. 14–17.

The third movement of *Sonata in C Major*, Hob. XVI: 50, provides a similar example. Here, Haydn includes an element of harmonic surprise with an intrusive B-major sonority inserted where the dominant chord in C major would usually appear. If appropriately performed for an attentive listener, this should provoke a chuckle!

Allegro molto

The musical score for Figure 9 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system is marked 'Allegro molto' and shows a piano (p) section with a dynamic shift to forte (f) in the second measure. The second system continues the piece, showing a piano (p) section with a dynamic shift to forte (f) in the second measure.

FIGURE 9
Franz Josef Haydn,
Sonata in C Major,
Hob. XVI: 50, III.
Allegro molto,
mm. 8–12.

Harmonic surprise in Haydn's sonatas is certainly not confined to the above example. On several occasions, Haydn takes us by surprise with sudden, unexpected, and comedic modulations. In the development of the first movement of *Sonata in C Major*, Hob. XVI: 35, the music moves toward A minor while hinting at a darker mood on the horizon. But lest we get too serious too soon, we are unexpectedly diverted to F major in a manner that is amusing and anything but serious.

Allegro con brio

FIGURE 10
 Franz Josef Haydn, *Sonata in C Major*,
 Hob. XVI: 35, I. Allegro con brio,
 mm. 68–72.

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It should be noted that Haydn's frequent reliance on motivic rather than melodic gestures facilitates these procedures. Melodic and lyrical material is not as conducive to the abrupt dynamic changes, harmonic surprises, and sudden silences that are to be found in the above examples. This feature of Haydn's writing establishes one of several key differences to be found when comparing Haydn's musical language with that of his contemporary, W. A. Mozart. While humor is certainly found in Mozart's music, particularly in the comic operas, it is less prominent in the solo keyboard works where lyricism and melody occupy a more central role.

Haydn's Humor and Its Influence on Beethoven

Haydn influenced Beethoven in various ways, and Beethoven's reliance on motivic gestures is one characteristic that can be traced to Haydn.⁶ Of interest is the way those components that propel humor, surprise, and the musical hijinks outlined above are absorbed and assimilated by Beethoven. The conclusion of the second movement of Beethoven's *Sonata in G Major*, Op. 14, No. 2, seems indebted to the conclusion of the first movement of Haydn's *Sonata in G Major*, Hob. XVI: 40 (Figure 5). Like Haydn, Beethoven plays a musical prank on his audience by setting up a quiet and understated conclusion, only to shatter our expectations with a subito *ff* chord.

The musical score for Figure 11 is a piano part in 4/4 time, marked Andante. It consists of four measures. The first measure starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second measure continues the melodic line and includes a *pp* dynamic marking. The third measure shows a *ff* dynamic marking, indicating a sudden increase in volume. The fourth measure concludes the passage with a *ff* dynamic marking.

FIGURE 11
Ludwig van Beethoven,
Sonata in G Major,
Op. 14, No. 2, II.
Andante, mm. 87–90.

Beethoven embraces dynamic extremes, harmonic surprise, use of silence, and a rhythmically playful approach to the *sforzando* that is so characteristic in Haydn's sonatas, particularly the later works. A look at the third movement of Haydn's *Sonata in E-flat Major*, Hob. XVI: 52, with its use of *fz* on weak beats, dynamic extremes, and harmonic surprise could quite easily be mistaken for a work by Beethoven.

The musical score for Figure 12 is a piano part in 2/4 time, marked Presto. It consists of six measures. The first three measures feature a *fz* (sforzando) dynamic marking on weak beats. The fourth measure features a *ff* dynamic marking. The fifth measure features a *p* (piano) dynamic marking. The sixth measure concludes the passage with a *p* dynamic marking.

FIGURE 12
Franz Josef Haydn,
Sonata in E-flat
Major, Hob. XVI:
52, III. Finale-Presto,
mm. 175–186.

This block shows the continuation of the musical score for Figure 12, specifically measures 175-186. It features a piano part in 2/4 time, marked Presto. The score shows a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with various dynamic markings and articulations.

On the other hand, the opening of the fourth movement of Beethoven's *Sonata in D Major*, Op. 10, No. 3, with its motivic gestures, use of silence, dynamic surprise, and suspense seems to come directly from Haydn's playbook. As in many of the examples by Haydn referenced above, the mood here is one of good-natured humor and playfulness.

Allegro

p *cresc.* *f*

FIGURE 13
Ludwig van Beethoven,
Sonata in D Major,
Op. 10, No. 3, IV.
Rondo-Allegro, mm. 1–4.

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Not to be overlooked, however, is the element of humor which weaves its way prominently through many of these works and no doubt pleased and amused his students and listeners alike.³ It is perhaps the latter aspect of Haydn's writing that sets him apart from most of his contemporaries.



The element of humor is but one facet of Haydn's unique genius, and it would be a mistake to color all his output with the same brush. While humor remains close to the surface in many of these works, part of Haydn's gift is his ability to balance light and shade and to incorporate humor within a larger musical structure that reflects a broad range of atmosphere and emotion. A failure to recognize the humor in Haydn's music would be akin to ignoring the operatic influence in Mozart's sonatas, obscuring or even losing the message of the music altogether.

Alerting students to these features can broaden their imaginative engagement with the instrument and perhaps allow them to identify elements that are relatable to their own experience. Ultimately, it can be helpful for students to realize that playing and practicing classical repertoire does not always have to be serious but can include the odd prank, along with elements that are funny, humorous, comedic, and playful. ■

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NOTES

- ¹ Franz Josef Haydn lived from 1732 to 1809.
- ² Don Michael Randel, ed., "Galant style," in *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2001): 332.
- ³ It can be argued the Haydn would not have included musical "jokes" in his output had he not been confident that the listener or player(s) would in fact have gotten the joke!
- ⁴ This is more obviously the case with Beethoven, but it is also evident in Mozart's keyboard writing where works such as K. 310, K. 332, K. 333, K. 533, or K. 576 include an element of keyboard brilliance that is less common in Haydn.
- ⁵ Jane Magrath, *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* (Van Nuys: Alfred Publishing Company, 1995), 88–94.
- ⁶ Note, for example, that Beethoven's first set of published piano sonatas, Op. 2, are dedicated to Haydn.



SEAN SCHULZE is on the keyboard faculty at the Cleveland Institute of Music where he teaches piano pedagogy and piano literature to undergraduate and graduate students and applied piano to students in the Joint Music Program with Case Western Reserve University. Additionally, he serves as Associate Dean for Academic Partnerships.

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HOW AN ALTERNATIVELY SIZED KEYBOARD

Transformed My Artistry and Life as a Musician and Teacher

by Jess Johnson

“But you’re such a good pianist. Why would you even need a smaller keyboard?”

I get asked this question a lot when I perform on an alternatively sized piano keyboard that better fits my hands. This well-meaning comment reveals inherent biases against using a smaller keyboard for greater artistic possibilities. Does playing on a smaller keyboard in some way diminish my artistry? By performing on the conventional-sized keyboard, am I somehow more accomplished and legitimate as a pianist? If I sound frustrated, it’s because the standard keyboard is meant for those with larger hands—hands that can easily reach a tenth and play large chords with ease. Demographic research indicates that 87% of women and 24% of men have hands that are too small for the conventional keyboard.¹ Let’s unpack that.

If you have a handspan between fingers 1 and 5 that is less than 8.5 inches, you’re playing the wrong-sized keyboard.² Additionally, the span between fingers 2 and 5 is a huge factor in playing with ease and reducing risks for injury.³ In a study that included 453 pianists, researchers Rhonda Boyle, Robin Boyle, and Erica Booker highlighted the significant variations in handspans between males and females (see Figure 1).



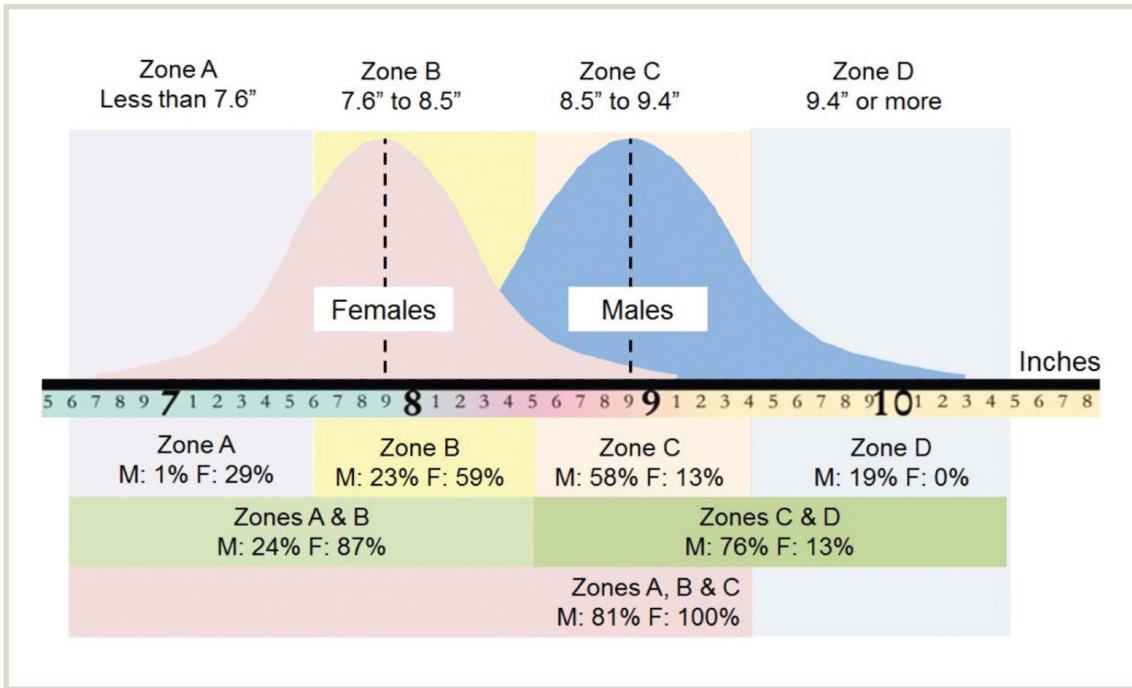


Figure 1
Pianist Hand
Spans: Gender
Differences⁴

My own handspan between fingers 1 and 5 in my dominant hand (RH) is a mere 7.5 inches (Zone A). One millimeter less and I could not have pursued a professional career as a pianist due to limitations on repertoire choices. Through tenacity and grit, I worked my way through graduate school and my mid-career performing big romantic and contemporary works on the conventional-sized keyboard that forced me to push the limits of my range of motion.⁴ Most of the time, my musical choices were severely limited. Since many passages are not “under my hand,” I used larger rotational gestures and more torso engagement for better alignment, all carefully choreographed, measuring ergonomic angles down to the smallest increments. I relied on speed for *ff* chords and octaves, diminishing my creative and artistic exploration of sound. It takes much longer to learn a work when negotiating all of these compensatory gestures—modifying fingerings, redistributing passages, and choosing precise choreography—due to a smaller handspan.

In 2006, I had the privilege of hearing Professor Carol Leone, a leading advocate for the adoption of alternatively sized keyboards, perform on a DS 6.0 piano keyboard (1/2 inch smaller per octave than the conventional keyboard) at an MTNA National Conference.⁵ While Leone is an exquisite artist no matter what size keyboard she uses, she made a compelling case for alternatively sized piano keyboards that impacted me profoundly.

Demographic research indicates that 87% of women and 24% of men have handspsans that are too small for the conventional keyboard.¹

Fast forward to the life-changing moment in 2015 when I started practicing on my own DS 5.5 piano keyboard, experiencing a whole new level of artistic and technical freedom. After a lifetime of fighting the instrument, I was able to accommodate 9ths and large chords with ease and without dropping notes.

Recently I completed a recording project on Albany Records entitled *Sojourn: New Works for Piano* that features six newly commissioned works by women all performed on a DS 5.5 keyboard.⁶ This album is a labor of love that combines my passion for working with living composers (especially women who are systemically underrepresented) with playing on a piano keyboard that invites a huge range of musical and artistic possibilities for pianists with small handspsans.



While I can easily switch back and forth between keyboard sizes, I much prefer the smaller keyboard. I make no excuses and allow the playing to speak for itself. With more keyboard manufacturers and innovative technologies making it easier for an action to be used in multiple instruments, it is past time to offer these alternatively sized piano keyboards for pianists at any stage of development. 🎹



JESS JOHNSON is praised for her “warm lyricism” and “eloquent advocacy” of contemporary music. Her latest album *Sojourn* (Albany Records) features 21st-century works by women performed on the Steinbuhler DS 5.5 keyboard. She serves as Professor of Piano and Pedagogy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is a member of the NCKP Wellness Committee.

NOTES

¹ Rhonda Boyle, Robin Boyle, and Erica Booker, “Pianist Hand Spans: Gender and Ethnic Differences and Implications for Piano Playing,” in *Australasian Piano Pedagogy Conference Proceedings* (July 2015), appca.com.au.

² For more information about the benefits of playing on an alternatively sized keyboard, please see Pianists for Alternately-Sized Keyboards (PASK) paskpiano.org. If you’d like to support the movement, please sign the petition to manufacturers here: paskpiano.org/petition-to-manufacturers.

³ The handspan of my right hand between fingers 2 and 5 is only 5.4 inches. This is one of many reasons that the smaller keyboard is so freeing for me.

⁴ Boyle, et al., “Pianist Hand Spans.”

⁵ Fortunately, while I did not injure myself due to my own work in healthy biomechanics and coordinated movement, pianists with small handspans are at greater risk for pain and injury due to frequent use of extreme ranges of motion. Please see: Ju-Yang Chi, Mark Halaki, Erica Booker, Rhonda Boyle, and Bronwen J. Ackermann, “Interaction Between Hand Span and Different Sizes of Keyboards on EMG Activity in Pianists: An Observational Study,” *Applied Ergonomics* 97, no. 103518 (November 2021). doi.org/10.1016/j.apergo.2021.103518.

⁶ For more information, please see albanyrecords.com/catalog/troy1953/ and jessjohnsonpiano.com/sojourn-liner-notes.

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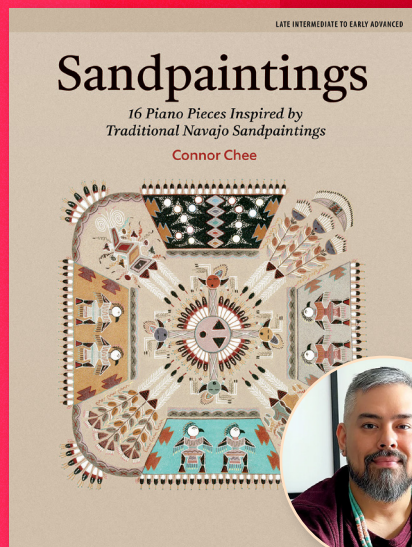
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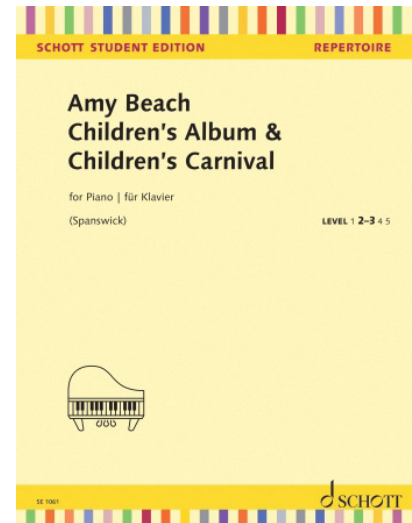
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Send in the clowns!

by Matt A. Mason

Another entry into the lexicon of clown-inspired character pieces, “Harlequin” is a jubilant composition found in *Children’s Carnival*, Op. 25. The playful, leaping melody portrays the nimble, comedic qualities of the Harlequin character, while the juxtapositions of dynamics, the bell-like *acciaccaturas*, and the contrasting *staccato* and *legato* sections provide a sense of mischief. This work is similar in composition—in its downbeat-centered grace notes and joyous-yet-impish nature—to both the “Arlequin” and “Lettres Dansantes” movements of *Carnaval* by Robert Schumann, while Beach’s complete six-piece set is a pedagogical successor to *Album for the Young*. The dexterous leaps and the speed of composition presents a technically difficult yet satisfying challenge to the intermediate-level pianist.



The two A sections of this ternary composition require a light, focused right hand and an automatic left hand. The left-hand accompaniment of the A section utilizes a single chord per bar, which can be taught as a block chord before wavering between a bass-and-chord (oom-pah) accompaniment style. The voice leading requires only small movements in the left hand, which can easily become automatic, allowing for greater focus on the right hand. To address the grace notes of measures 1 and 2, the student should begin by playing each of them as a single block that delicately bounces from one group to the next. Rather than falling into the keys to engage the piano, the student should attempt to use the keys as a springboard, pushing up and out of the keys to engage the sound. Once that leap can be successfully managed, students can begin treating the grace notes as individual notes (played on the beat) by subtly rolling the hand from left to right, led by the inner wrist joint, until a graceful, bell-like tone is achieved.

EXCERPT 1:

Amy Beach, “Harlequin” mm. 1–2.

The image shows the first two measures of the piece "Harlequin" by Amy Beach. The music is written for piano in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The right hand (treble clef) features a melodic line with grace notes on the first and second beats of each measure. The left hand (bass clef) provides a simple accompaniment of single chords per bar.

Amy Beach “Harlequin” from *Children’s Album and Children’s Carnival* Op. 25 © 2023 Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission of European American Music Distributors Company, sole U.S. and Canadian agent for Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany.

“HARLEQUIN”

FROM *CHILDREN’S ALBUM & CHILDREN’S CARNIVAL*
by Amy Beach

The trickiest part of the B section, which features a left-hand melody and off-beat right-hand accompaniment, is the overlapping positions of the hands. Particularly, the thumb and second fingers of both hands occupy approximately the same horizontal space. When teaching this section, it is important for students to account for this overlap. In measures 49–52 (see Excerpt 2), have the student place their right hand deeper into the keyboard, keeping a high curve and letting the fingers touch the back of the key bed. The left hand stays closer to the edge of the white keys. As the suggested fingers do not require the thumb or pinky to play a black key, the left hand can simply flatten to accommodate the B-flats with one of the hand’s longer fingers. In doing so, each hand gets its own distinct vertical zone and students can easily avoid bumping one hand out of position.

The playful, leaping melody portrays the nimble, comedic qualities of the Harlequin character, while the juxtapositions of dynamics, the bell-like *acciaccaturas*, and the contrasting *staccato* and *legato* sections provide a sense of mischief.

”



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EXCERPT 2:

Amy Beach, "Harlequin" mm. 49–52.

3
2

la seconda volta pp

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Amy Beach's *Children's Carnival* is an excellent repository for standalone recital pieces like "Harlequin," a piano studio project, or a student's introduction to performing a whole set of character pieces. Teachers can always rely on Amy Beach to deliver wit, whimsy, and great pedagogical opportunities. And so, in the great tradition of the *Commedia dell'arte*, send in the clowns! 🎭



MATT A. MASON is Assistant Professor of Musicianship at Roosevelt University, where he teaches music theory, piano, and composition. He holds a PhD from the University of Iowa and master's degree from Butler University.

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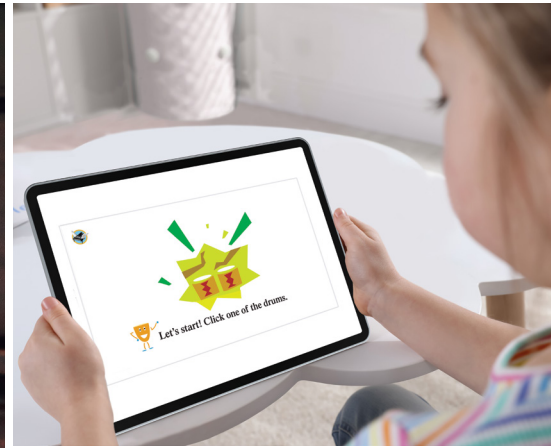
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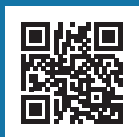
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EASY PIANO LEAD SHEETS AND CHORD CHARTS LEVEL 1: WORLD FOLK SONGS

by Olivia Ellis and Davis Dorrrough

Playing from lead sheets is an essential skill every musician should have in their toolkit. Incorporating lead sheets and chord charts into a student's education is an effective way to build harmonic understanding and prepare them for performance opportunities outside of the classroom.

For beginners or musicians new to lead sheets, this collection features folk songs in both lead sheet and chord chart formats. Lead sheets include notated melody with lyrics and chord symbols. Chord charts include only the lyric text with chord symbols. Ellis and Dorrrough include a step-by-step breakdown on how to practice, making these experiences more accessible. Major and minor chord charts are supplemented by a keyboard image to demonstrate how chords are constructed.

Additionally, students less familiar with playing chords can benefit from warm-up drills that feature common chord progressions. More experienced students can challenge themselves by exploring the variety of suggested left- and two-handed accompaniment patterns. Using these resources, teachers can guide students to experiment with embellishing the melody or explore transposing.

Songs are written in C, G, F majors and their relative keys, and each includes a chord difficulty chart using a ranking system from one to three stars. One-star songs only use primary chords, two-star songs add in extra diatonic chords, and three-star songs use non-diatonic chords; this ranking is based only on the type of chords, not the difficulty of the melody.

Each song includes historical background information, creating a contextualized learning experience for the student. English translations are also provided when applicable. A diverse selection of sixty songs from over thirty-five different countries, from "Happy Birthday" to "Bahay Kubo" from the Philippines, allows students to enjoy both new and familiar tunes.

Whether students are playing piano in their school's jazz band, accompanying a musical, or learning covers of their favorite popular music, studying this type of notation fosters a deeper understanding of harmonic structure and enables students to be creative in how they choose to play the melody or accompaniment. The approachability of this collection will enable students to become confident and well-rounded musicians. (Creative Piano Teacher, \$19.99)

—Lisa Mioduszewski



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KEITH SNELL PIANO COURSE FOR THE ADULT BEGINNER, BOOK 1 AND BOOK 2

by Keith Snell

This is a pedagogical gem for adults wishing to begin their piano journey. A multikey reading approach guides the student from Middle C position to playing in all twelve major keys and four minor keys over the course of the two-volume series. In addition to its sequenced approach to introducing reading, the text boasts a robust theory and technical curriculum. Students who work from this series will come away with a solid foundation in music fundamentals.

The repertoire features original pieces by Snell, famous classical themes, folk tunes from around the world, and pedagogical works by Czerny, Beethoven, Haydn, Gurlitt, Reinagle, Spindler, Salutrinskaya, Telemann, and numerous other classical composers. A unique attribute of the method is the incorporation of rote teaching repertoire with one newly composed rote piece in each of the first six units of Book 1.

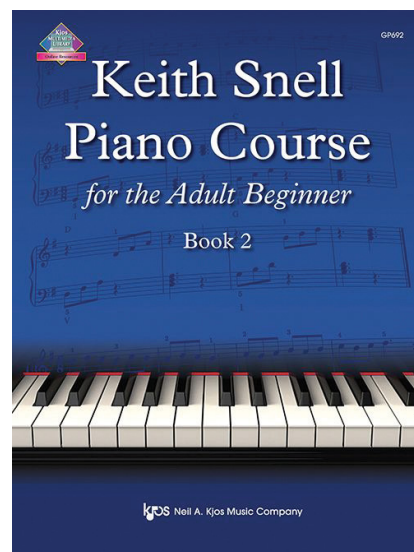
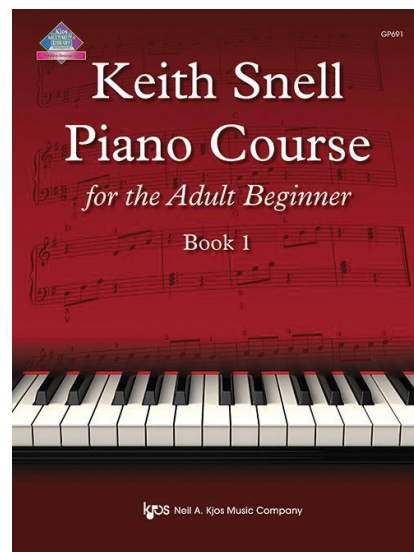
Early in Unit 2 of the first volume, students learn an elementary form of *legato* pedaling through a creative pedal etude titled “Meditation.” Compared to many methods, this is remarkably early to tackle artistic pedaling. Snell’s approach is a wonderfully accessible strategy to teach artistic playing and listening skills at a student’s earliest lessons.

Each unit features a well-sequenced progression of repertoire, technique drills, and written theory. Popular music arrangements and lead sheets are omitted, allowing the text to remain up to date for years to come, no matter the changing trends of popular music. Additionally, because students are learning to recognize chord symbols and to be fluent in chord playing by using these books, they will be well-equipped to explore supplemental popular music styles.

A large and diverse multimedia resource base includes:

- Streamable accompaniment recordings for the early-level pieces in Units 1–2 of Book 1.
- Play-along recordings (slow and fast tempi) for all pieces starting in Unit 3 of Book 1.
- YouTube performance demonstration videos which provide aural and visual models of all repertoire and technique exercises in the method.
- The online theory answer key which allows students to check their own work outside of the lesson.

The print layout and sizing are exceptionally user-friendly, as is the sturdy spiral binding on the volumes—no more cracked plastic bindings or books that won’t stay open! There is just enough instructional text throughout to provide guidance without visually cluttering the page or distracting from the music. I am excited to explore this text with my adult students! (Kjos, \$14.99 each)—*Hannah Roberts*



FIRST HALLOWEEN HITS: JOHN THOMPSON'S EASIEST PIANO COURSE

arranged by Christopher Hussey

This is an exciting Halloween-themed collection and a welcome addition of new repertoire for students in the category of holiday music. The collection boasts of fifteen pieces for the early-elementary through the late-elementary pianist.

A note to teachers and parents in the table of contents includes, "This collection of spooky favorites, arranged in the John Thompson tradition, is intended as supplementary material for advancing young pianists." The pieces are listed in order of level of difficulty beginning with simple note values and progressing to more complex rhythms, syncopation, more accidentals, and shifts in position and patterns.

Students and teachers will enjoy these pieces featuring arrangements of classical melodies such as Chopin's *Funeral March*, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Dukas, Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King*, and Tchaikovsky's "The Witch" from his *Album for the Young*. The remaining pieces in this collection fall into the category of popular hits from movies and Broadway shows. One cannot go wrong with the memorable "Ding Dong! The Witch is Dead" from *The Wizard of Oz*, or the famous *Phantom of the Opera* theme, or the hip "I'm in Love with a Monster" from *Hotel Transylvania*, or the sorrowful tune of "Jack's Lament" from *Nightmare Before Christmas*, or even "Someday" from *The Zombies*.

These arrangements align closely with the original pieces and/or songs. Students will be able to recognize them, and even sing along with them with ease. All of the pieces fall into tidy five-finger patterns with an occasional extension as the pieces progress in level of difficulty. Furthermore, while there are a few "golden oldies," many of these pieces are fairly contemporary so students will recognize them in terms of style and sound.

Hussey has done a brilliant job of arranging these very cool tunes. Students will sound great playing them and teachers will enjoy teaching them as well. It certainly goes on my bookshelf for use soon! (Willis Music \$12.99)—*Adrienne Wiley*



“These arrangements align closely with the original pieces and/or songs. Students will be able to recognize them, and even sing along with them with ease.”



S1-2

DISNEY ADULT PIANO ADVENTURES: CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY DISNEY HITS 1

arranged by Nancy and Randall Faber

DISNEY ADULT PIANO ADVENTURES: CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY DISNEY HITS 2

arranged by Nancy and Randall Faber

S2-3

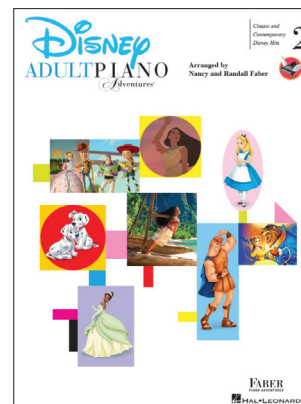
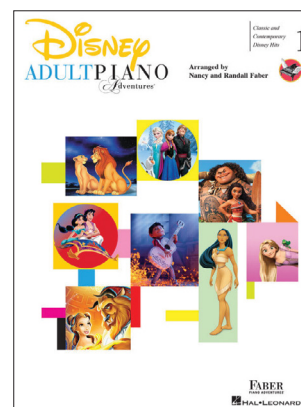
There is nothing quite like a favorite Disney song to bring one back to some of their happiest memories. These books complement Nancy and Randall Faber's *Adult Piano Adventures* method books and can also work for older-beginner teenage students.

Book 1 includes twenty-nine pieces divided into three sections: (1) pieces written using five-finger patterns, simple rhythms, minimal hand position shifts, beginning articulations and dynamics, and direct pedal; (2) pieces written using C major scales and primary chords, building in difficulty to include hand expansions, hand crossings, more use of the damper pedal, simple syncopations, and harmonic intervals; and (3) pieces written using G major scales and primary chords featuring *legato* pedaling, an expanded keyboard range, and more sophisticated phrasing. Teacher duets for pieces in the first section add rhythmic and harmonic interest. Favorite selections from Book 1 include "Gaston," great for playing longer phrases and varied articulation, "Under the Sea," with simple syncopations, and beautiful arrangements of "Reflection" from *Mulan* and "Beauty and the Beast," both of which help students to listen to long phrases, note decay, balance, and dynamic shaping. Some of the upbeat selections such as "Step in Time" and "Part of Your World" are challenging to arrange with simple rhythms but could provide a window into exploring the difficult rhythms one might find in an intermediate arrangement that sounds closer to the original song. Each piece is carefully edited with helpful fingerings, indications when to move the hand or cross fingers, and appropriate dynamic and articulation markings.

As students progress to the intermediate level, they will enjoy developing new skills as they choose from twenty-four Disney favorites in Book 2. "Remember Me" from *Coco* helps develop independent hand movement covering a wider range of the keyboard, is ideal for phrasing and *rubato*, and includes *legato* thirds and hand crossings.

Fans of *Frozen* will enjoy the arrangement of "Do You Want to Build a Snowman?" featuring both melody and accompaniment figures in the right hand, which requires a varied tone to differentiate each layer. "Cruella De Vil" and "Ev'rybody Wants to Be a Cat" are perfect for students wanting to play jazz. The swung eighth notes and syncopations are made easier with these familiar tunes. Students who love lyrical pieces will enjoy quality arrangements of "Colors of the Wind," "Go the Distance," and "Beauty and the Beast." "We Don't Talk About Bruno" has more difficult rhythms with sixteenth notes and syncopations that accurately portray the lyrics and style of the song.

Nancy and Randall Faber's arrangements in these two volumes motivate students and help to quickly develop skills as students have fun learning their favorite Disney songs! (Hal Leonard, \$14.99)—*Ivan Hurd*



EPIC POP & ROCK MEDLEYS FOR PIANO DUET

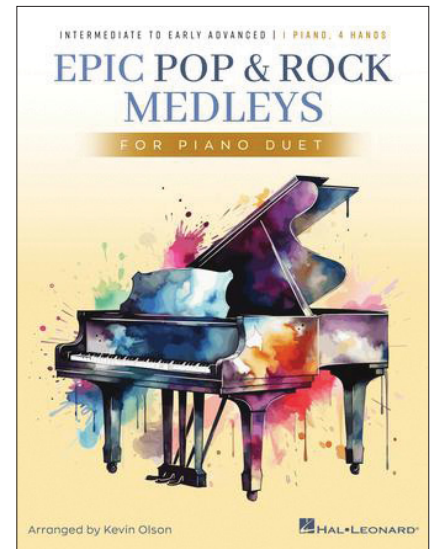
arranged by Kevin Olson

This exciting new collection provides pianists and their duet partners with fun, engaging pop and rock medleys by some of the most famous artists and bands of the past century. The collection features music by The Beatles, Michael Jackson, Elton John, Bruno Mars, Nirvana, Queen, and Taylor Swift. Each of the seven arrangements is a medley of three to four celebrated songs by each artist, taking listeners on a journey through the life and work of these musical legends.

The first two medleys in the collection, based on music by The Beatles and Michael Jackson, are standouts. The Beatles medley opens with “Day Tripper,” giving way to the gentle swing of “Penny Lane” and the rock groove of “Lady Madonna” and wrapping up with a heartfelt arrangement of “Let It Be.” A journey through the music of Michael Jackson begins with The Jackson 5 hits “I Want You Back” and “I’ll Be There” and ends with an exciting arrangement of “Thriller” that is sure to entertain performers and audiences alike.

Olson’s careful curation of artists and songs provides players with stylistic diversity across the spectrum of rock and pop, and the medleys contain a balance of lyrical ballads and driving rock songs. Both *primo* and *secondo* parts are of equal difficulty, and both feature the melody and accompaniment at different times, making either part musically satisfying. Although lyrics do not appear in the score, the superior editing helps highlight the contour and rhythm of the original song, but duet partners will want to familiarize themselves with the original songs and artists as they learn these arrangements. Slurring and articulation throughout the collection are helpful for capturing the inflection of the original works, and occasional fingerings guide pianists through tricky passages.

Ideal for late-intermediate and early-advanced level pianists, these duets would make an exciting and diverse addition to a piano ensemble concert, capturing the fun and collaborative spirit of duet playing that has been a part of the tradition for centuries. For teachers of high school or adult students, these duets make an excellent project to explore the intricacies of ensemble playing with music not normally found in the piano duet literature at this level. (Hal Leonard, \$17.99)—*Hayden Coie* ■



“This exciting new collection provides pianists and their duet partners with fun, engaging pop and rock medleys by some of the most famous artists and bands of the past century.”



THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS



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ADRIENNE E. WILEY is Professor of Piano, Pedagogy, and Class Piano at Central Michigan University. She loves teaching both college- and precollege-aged students and discovering new gems of teaching literature.



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BOOK

WOMEN AND THE PIANO: A History in 50 Lives

by Susan Tomes

review by Suzanne Schons

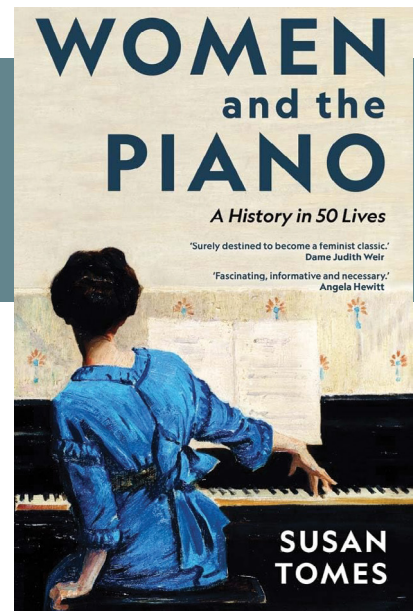
Tomes could have titled her book *Fifty Great Pianists*, and it would be an apt description of what is inside. It just so happens that all fifty pianists profiled in the book are women—brilliant, resourceful, highly accomplished people, many of whom concertized widely and successfully, composed, and influenced other prominent musicians. Yet, these pianists have been overlooked and some largely forgotten, for no other discernable reason than they are women. Women are and have been an integral part of the development of piano playing and the repertoire we have for it today, and Tomes's book is an important building block to the necessary task of updating and expanding the history of pianism. Every woman's story in the book is so compelling, and Tomes is an engaging storyteller who paints a vivid picture of the striking talents and accomplishments of each pianist, and the highs and lows of their efforts to pursue their passion. A few of the pianists are familiar names, including Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn, and Amy Beach, and Tomes provides some details and insights I hadn't read before. But there are many more whose stories and works are just as important to know, over a wide span of music history.

There is Hélène de Montgeroult, a contemporary of Mozart and Beethoven (born in between them), who lived a dramatic life that included being sentenced to the guillotine and then spared because of her talents. She was a top performer, teacher, and composer who wrote a course of studies for the piano that included hundreds of exercises and etudes (as well as other works) in a virtuosic and forward-looking style. Her etudes point to the music of Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Brahms, yet were written between 1788 and 1812, when those composers were not born yet or very young. Tomes notes that Montgeroult's student Johann Baptist Cramer wrote studies too, likely built upon hers, which are arguably not quite on the same level, yet his are the ones preserved and still played

today.¹ Thankfully, some performances and recordings of Montgeroult's works are becoming available, and hopefully there will be many more to come!

There is the inspiring story of Louise Farrenc, who was a prolific composer of solo piano, chamber, and orchestral works, and the only woman to be a full professor of piano at the Paris Conservatoire in the nineteenth century. She was an early advocate of equal pay for women, who argued her case for fair compensation to the director of the Conservatoire, way back in 1850, and won!² Yet there is also concert pianist Olga Samaroff, who was frustrated to be constantly paid less than men for the same concerto performances, over decades.³ Samaroff accomplished numerous "firsts" as a pianist, one of which was being the first American to perform the complete Beethoven sonata cycle.⁴ Tomes addresses issues of racism that Black women pianists have had to confront—for example, Margaret Bonds, the first Black person to perform a concerto with the Chicago Symphony, who, when she studied at Northwestern University, was not allowed to live on campus or use campus facilities.⁵ Some additional profiles I found especially interesting, from different points in history and areas of the world, were those of Wilhelmine Clauss-Szarvady, Teresa Carreño, Zhu Xiao-Mei, Hazel Scott, and Nina Simone.

After the short biographies of the fifty pianists are presented, Tomes reflects upon the challenges that women pianists have faced throughout history and where we are now. Some of the historical challenges are well known, including less access to education until relatively recently (especially in composition)⁶ and the weight of gender roles. Others that she points out may not be details people think of as much, such as how the limitations on educational opportunities also meant getting shut out of networking and the collaborations that arise from



REVIEW

it, and how fewer large-scale works were written by women because they did not have access to orchestral playing or any reason to think a work for a large ensemble composed by a woman would be performed.⁷ Tomes also considers the challenges for women to maintain concert careers today—again, some are fairly apparent, and some more subtle yet burdensome.

There is much to consider in this book, but reading it is easy, because it is a page turner! This is partly because of Tomes's writing and her thought-provoking points, and because the musicians described in it are masters of the instrument who are fascinating to learn about. The biographies are a great starting point for learning more about musicians who may not be as familiar as they deserve and sparking the desire to investigate further. (Yale University Press, 2024, 304 pages, hardcover \$35; other formats available) 📖



SUZANNE SCHONS is Senior Adjunct Professor at the University of St. Thomas and piano instructor at K&S Conservatory of Music in Minnesota. She holds a PhD in Music Education with an emphasis in Piano Pedagogy.

NOTES

- ¹ Susan Tomes, *Women and the Piano: A History in 50 Lives* (Yale University Press, 2024), 47.
- ² Tomes, 57–58.
- ³ Tomes, 130.
- ⁴ Tomes, 130–131.
- ⁵ Tomes, 158.
- ⁶ Tomes, 202.
- ⁷ Tomes, 203.

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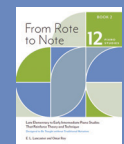
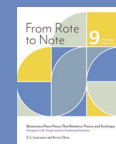
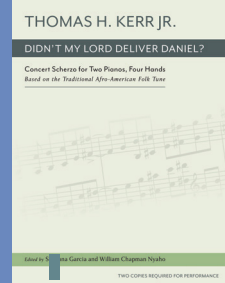
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A close-up photograph of a person's arm and hand holding a pencil. The hand is positioned over a white eraser on a dark, textured surface. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the skin and the texture of the eraser and surface.

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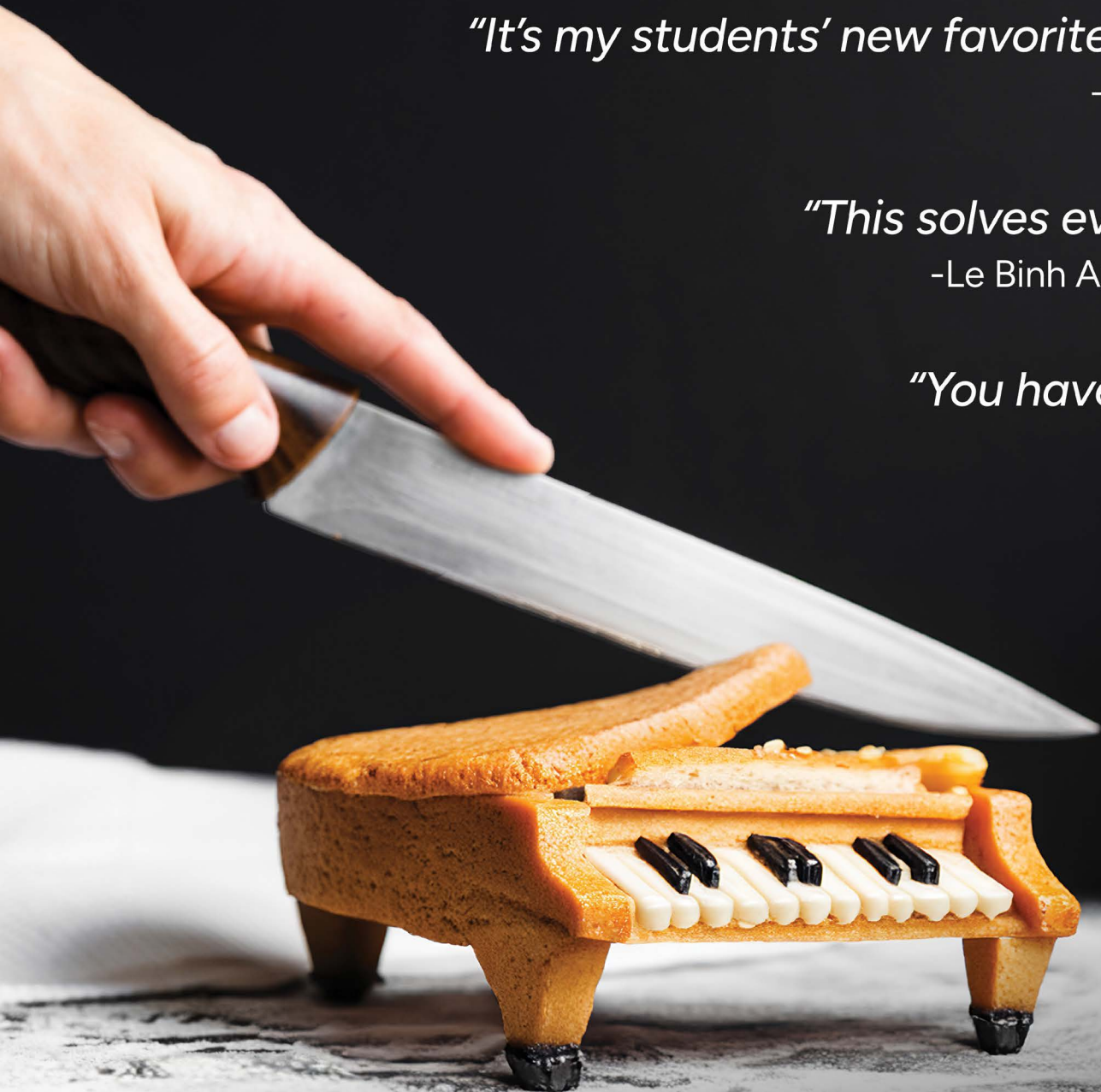
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RECORDING

SERGIO FIORENTINO



RACHMANINOFF COMPLETE SOLO PIANO WORKS – LIVE

RH-006 – 6 CDs

[7:09:36]

rhineclassics.com

Most piano fanciers first encountered the Italian pianist Sergio Fiorentino (1927–1998) in the final five years of his life. A longtime pedagogue at the conservatory in Naples, he retired from teaching in 1993, and at the instigation of a German enthusiast began to regularly perform and record. Rhine Classics has now released several large boxes of his live performances, including this rendition of the complete solo piano works of Rachmaninoff, recorded over four concerts in November of 1987. Although his studio recordings are elegant and at times a bit careful, here we witness a different

side of Fiorentino's temperament; the pianist goes for the gusto, throwing caution to the winds. His playing is at turns colorful, sophisticated, fiery, and mischievous, a throwback to the so-called "Golden Age" of pianists that included Rachmaninoff himself. Of particular interest are the performances of the complete transcriptions and the two piano sonatas. The transcriptions possess a wit and ease that belie the technical difficulty involved, and the sonatas are played with an intensity nearing hysteria, making for hair-raising listening. A priceless release. —*Richard Masters*

2025 MTNA National Conference

March 15–19, 2025, Minneapolis, Minnesota

The 2025 MTNA National Conference, March 15–19 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, will bring together the most representative cross-section of the MTNA membership. Michelle Cann and the first-prize winner of the National Chopin Piano Competition will highlight the evening recitals. Composer Libby Larsen will provide the keynote address. Pedagogy Saturday boasts five tracks: Artistry; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Musician Wellness; Recreational Music Making; and Young Professionals. As always, the national competitions will feature the outstanding performances of students in all instrument areas as well as composition. And perennial favorites like the exhibit hall, poster sessions and showcases will all be a part of the conference experience.

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MUSIC FOR PIANO DUO

William Chapman Nyaho and Susanna Garcia, *Piano Duo*

MSR Classics: MS1753

[63:36]

msrcd.com

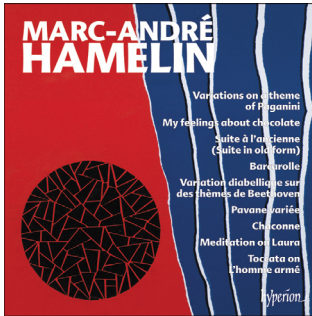
“What truly makes this disc special are the subtleties of phrasing along with spectacular pacing and exquisite sensitivity. This results in stunning and captivating performances on a must-own CD.”

The Nyaho/Garcia Piano Duo shares a musical philosophy and mission of bringing lesser-known and newer works to the attention of the musical community. Having met during their doctoral studies at the University of Texas at Austin, they soon found themselves both teaching at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. This danceworthy recording is evidence of a long and joyous relationship between Nyaho and Garcia, who have independently and together championed works by underrepresented composers. The score of Thomas H. Kerr, Jr.’s heartening work, *Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel?* was recently released in a critical edition by Piano Education Press of the Frances Clark Center. Enjoyable and deserving of recognition is the ethereal and energetic *Epicycles* by Stella Sung in addition to Donald Grantham’s *Fantasy Variations on George Gershwin’s Prelude II*. Alberga’s minimalist *3-Day Mix* followed by the tango-derived Piazzolla is brilliant programming; the change in tone and style between the two is quite striking. What truly makes this disc special are the subtleties of phrasing along with spectacular pacing and exquisite sensitivity. This results in stunning and captivating performances on a must-own CD.

—Lucia Unrau

The advertisement features the Lamont School of Music logo (a stylized 'D' and 'U') and the text "Lamont School of Music UNIVERSITY OF DENVER". Below this, a photograph shows two men, Steven Mayer and Stephanie Cheng, sitting at a piano. Stephanie is on the left, wearing a red sweater, and Steven is on the right, wearing a dark shirt and glasses. They are both looking at a sheet of music. In the bottom right corner, there is a graphic with a mountain peak and the text "PERFORM AT YOUR PEAK". At the bottom left, the text reads "PIANO FACULTY: Stephanie Cheng, Steven Mayer, Emily Book McGree" and "du.edu/lamont".

NEW PIANO WORKS



Marc-André Hamelin, *piano*

Hyperion CDA68308

[74:19]

hyperion-records.co.uk

Pianist/composer Marc-André Hamelin again enralls us with his musical acumen, wit, and daunting pianism. Throughout the album, Hamelin's music references works from the distant and immediate past. From the "Vigorosamente" opening to its brilliant conclusion (which ingeniously presents *La campanella* in tandem with the main theme), Hamelin's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* dances through new territory while conjuring glimpses of the familiar. Each chord in *My Feelings About Chocolate* is a delightful morsel in its compositional confectioner's box. The liner notes referencing the score are as entertaining as the piece is clever. Although Baroque elements are implied in *Suite l'ancienne*, the ebullient, ephemeral, and frenzied moments in this

tour-de-force belies its title. The four-part *Barcarolle* also defies titular expectations. The structure emerges from a musical fog which never completely lifts; the abrupt finish evaporates any chance for true clarity. In *Pavane variée*, Hamelin transforms the chorale-like theme using opposing extremes — from calm to furious and ethereal to cacophonous. His quiet, unhurried pacing in *Meditation on Laura*, the most introspective improvisation on the album, leaves one feeling solitary and nostalgic. The other tracks are equally intriguing, with Hamelin's compositional ingenuity and pianistic mastery on full display in this unique album. —*Michael Dean*

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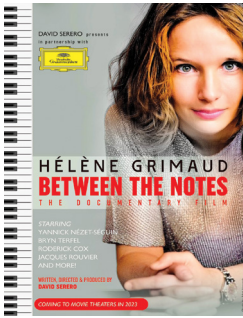


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BETWEEN THE NOTES: THE HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD PIANO STORY



Documentary

Producer David Serero in partnership with Deutsche Grammophon

[75:00]

vimeo.com/ondemand/helenegrimaud

Opera singer, actor, and producer David Serero directs this compelling documentary (premiered in December 2023). Through a series of interwoven interviews, we are taken on an intimate journey looking at the life and career of the acclaimed French pianist Hélène Grimaud. For the most part, Serero takes himself out of the equation in the film and we are left feeling as though we are getting to know Hélène Grimaud through a series of personal conversations with her, her teachers, and other well-known musical colleagues.

Photos, video clips, and excerpts of performances are seamlessly scattered throughout the documentary. Grimaud speaks about her early training, describing herself as a child who needed an outlet to release pent-up energy. Her parents enrolled her in various activities, and she ultimately discovered her passion in a general music class. The teacher suggested that the piano would be an excellent instrument for her and *voilà*, her career began. The interviews with former teacher Jacques Rouvier are fascinating as he recounts anecdotal stories of her precocious formative years. The film also reveals in detail Grimaud's passion for nature and wolves, in particular. She shares with us her belief that "nature is the ultimate muse."

Serero interviews numerous musicians who have worked extensively with Hélène Grimaud, giving us an insiders'

glimpse into collaborating with her. This impressive group includes Canadian conductor and musician Yannick Nézet-Séguin (currently director of the Met Opera), Edouard Fouré Caul-Futy (Conductor of the Philharmonie de Paris & Orchestre de Paris), Roderick Cox (Aspen Festival Orchestra Conductor), and well-known baritone Bryn Terfel. Grimaud's discussion of a typical concert day contains absolutely no pretense. She mentions that the "post-concert can have a sort of melancholy. You are always obsessing on the things that could have gone how they should have gone." She shows a humility and respect for the art of great pianism; that we are all on a never-ending journey to express the greatness of music. As she says, "there is not one single moment when we have the privilege of making music that we should take for granted."

It is impossible not to be musically inspired during this film. I encourage readers not only to take this inspiration for yourselves, but to share the documentary with your students. In this world of screens filled with pop stars, athletes, and influencers, it is an opportunity to show students a different kind of role model. Personally, I have long admired Grimaud's playing and have been looking forward to watching this documentary. It does not disappoint! Like her playing, Hélène Grimaud is genuine, passionate, and sincere.

—Heather Lanners



RICHARD MASTERS is a soloist, opera coach, and conductor based in Blacksburg, VA, where he is an associate professor of piano and collaborative piano on the music faculty at Virginia Tech's School of Performing Arts.



LUCIA UNRAU is Director of the Greenwood School of Music at Oklahoma State University. She maintains an active schedule as a performer, adjudicator, and NASM accreditation evaluator. Dr. Unrau holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin, Indiana University, and Oberlin Conservatory.



In addition to national and international performances as a member of the Manno-Dean Piano Duo, MICHAEL DEAN is in demand as a soloist and collaborative artist. He serves on the Oklahoma Music Teachers Association board and maintains an active schedule as a piano teacher, workshop clinician, and adjudicator.



Canadian pianist HEATHER SHEA LANNERS is Recordings Editor for *Piano Magazine* and Professor of Piano at the Greenwood School of Music at Oklahoma State University. She has performed throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, China, and Brazil and holds degrees from the University of Western Ontario, École Normale de Musique, and Eastman School of Music.

“To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.”

- ANATOLE FRANCE



by JENNIFER SNOW

As teachers, we are eternal learners at our core. Our thirst to improve, expand, and deepen our impact for our students continuously inspires us. This summer, I had the opportunity to attend the International Society for Music Education (ISME) conference hosted in Helsinki, Finland. The theme, “Advocacy for Sustainability in Music Education,” was highlighted in sessions, keynotes, and commissions. It was a dynamic gathering of the international music education community dedicated to music as a human right. The frequent referencing of the recently published “UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education,”¹ established an impressive vision for the present and the future. I encourage everyone to investigate this powerful document and reflect on how we can all individually and as a community realize its potential. In point five of the Preamble, the document states,

We also recognize that culture and the arts are integral to the holistic and inclusive development, resilience, and overall well-being of individuals and societies. ...We further recognize that culture and the arts play a vital role in the flourishing of human imagination, creativity, and self-expression, which nurtures exploration, curiosity, and expands the possibilities of creation...²

With these shared values, we actively approach our new teaching year with a flexible attitude toward student responsiveness, openness, curiosity, inclusivity, and probably most importantly, joy and passion for the transformative power of music in people’s lives.

Understanding the impact of our work creates an awareness of the cultural infrastructure piano teachers provide within community. As we prepare for The Piano Conference: NCKP 2025, we are innovating the experience for all attendees. Our opening day Summit will be creatively designed to allow full participation through interactive activities, dialogue, and collaborative work to dream. We will be imagining a sustainable future together while exploring questions of who we serve and how we create impact in a rapidly changing world. As we tackle disruptive technologies including artificial intelligence, emerging collaborations with other fields such as medicine, wide-ranging inequities, economic models, and the unique challenges of a new generation of learners, we are called to adapt and innovate for relevance and future impact.

We extend an invitation to all piano educators to join this vibrant gathering as we chart a course together to elevate the profession and sustain robust music education in our communities. The NCKP 2025 program will also highlight opportunities to share practice, research, performances, and creative projects through the call for proposals. The online conference event will include tracks in Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, and Mandarin. Engaging with colleagues from around the globe, we will expand our perspectives and celebrate our shared vocation.

As a community, we enthusiastically welcome autumn as the beginning of a new year. At The Frances Clark Center, we are tirelessly dedicated to serving piano educators, teaching artists, and scholars. Central to everything we pursue is our belief in the transformative power of music and the profound societal impact of inspired music educators. We are here to support and serve our dynamic community. We welcome you to explore our periodicals, rich online multi-media resources at pianoinspires.com, webinar series, publications for teachers and students, expansive courses, events, and the celebrated NCKP Conference both online and in Lombard, Illinois. With new digital access, *Piano Inspires Kids* magazine celebrates its one-year anniversary this fall as it continues to amplify student discovery and engagement around the world. Our Collegiate Connections initiatives and new Online Book Club foster exchange and connectivity. In addition to resources and experiences, the Center is also dedicated to advocating for the profession, celebrating the power of piano teachers, providing opportunities for engagement and community building.

As we launch into a demanding new year filled with activity, it is worthwhile to take time to reflect on the horizon and dream big. We look forward to a rewarding teaching year as a deeply connected and supportive community united by shared purpose. May music at the piano inspire and uplift your students this year, invigorate and motivate you in your teaching, and bring joy to the people and communities you impact. 🎵

NOTES

¹ UNESCO World Conference on Culture and Arts Education. “UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education.” Report from UNESCO World Conference on Culture and Arts Education, Abu Dhabi, 2024, accessed August 21, 2024, unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/02/WCCAUE_UNESCO%20Framework_EN_0.pdf

² UNESCO Framework, 2.

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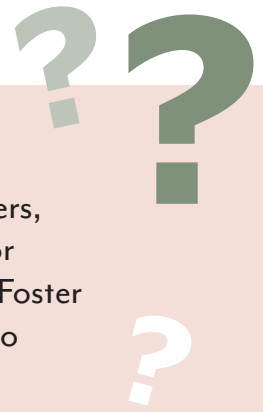
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I'm planning a student recital based on Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Although Beth plays pieces by European composers, I would like to include American piano compositions suitable for students written before 1860. I plan to arrange some Stephen Foster songs for four hands but would love to include other original solo American piano music. I would appreciate your suggestions!



ANSWER: Highlighting the relationships between music, literature, and history in a student recital based on Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* is a wonderfully creative idea! As you mentioned, European music traditions were indeed prevalent in America during the mid-nineteenth century. A challenge of programming American piano music from this period in a student recital is the relative scarcity of original compositions that are accessible for developing pianists. Below, I share six intermediate through early-advanced repertoire ideas by four notable nineteenth-century American composers.

Anthony Philip Heinrich's (1781–1861) *Philadelphia Waltz*, Op. 2, No. 2, is a pleasant dance in compound meter. At only thirty-eight measures in length, it features a repetitive melody with a broken-chord accompaniment. Heinrich's use of an extended coda with melodic embellishments, along with frequent moments of two against three between the hands, adds a layer of rhythmic complexity and interest.

Francis "Frank" Johnson (1792–1844), a keyed bugler and composer, published a collection of twelve dances titled *A Collection of New Cotillions*. Each cotillion presents a brief musical idea in a unique style associated with a specific dance. The right hand often features more active passagework, while the left hand provides blocked chord or Alberti accompaniment. *Victoria Gallop* is an equally engaging piece by Johnson that seems to capture the joyful spirit of dances from this period. Its compact length and sectional structure is reminiscent of a German Dance by Haydn.

William Mason's (1829–1908) *Lullaby* is an expressive piece characterized by its soaring, lyrical melody. William, son of Lowell Mason, uses an *ostinato* accompaniment to create a sense of serenity. *Lullaby* could be a compelling alternative to one of Chopin's more accessible Nocturnes, sharing similar technical and expressive challenges.

Clara Gottschalk-Peterson (1837–1910), the sister of Louis Moreau Gottschalk, was an accomplished pianist-composer who actively promoted her brother's musical legacy. *In Sylvan Glade* is an expressive waltz, characterized by chromatic harmonic nuances that evoke the romantic style. Gottschalk-Peterson's *Staccato Polka* is an animated dance featuring a crisply articulated A section and contrastingly lyrical B section. The polka is ideal for developing a *leggiero* touch and creating balance between textures.

Programming a recital that features mid-nineteenth-century American composers requires careful consideration of their historical context. For example, Stephen Foster, while celebrated for the memorable melodies of his folk songs, has a complex legacy due to problematic lyrics and an association with minstrel shows. In my studio, providing historical context to both students and the audience has helped create a meaningful dialogue and has fostered a more informed recital experience. ■

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Stephen Coombs, ed., *American Piano Repertoire, Level 1* (London: Faber Music, 2003).

Maurice Hinson, ed., *Masters of American Piano Music* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Music, 1992).

Gail Smith, ed., *Four Centuries of Women Composers* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, 2011).

Gail Smith, ed., *Women Composers in History: 18 Intermediate to Late Intermediate Piano Pieces by 8 Composers* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2013).



J. P. MURPHY is Assistant Professor of Piano and Piano Area Chair at the University of Oklahoma. He currently serves as President of the Oklahoma Music Teachers Association.

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