



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Christie Sowby presents: Echo Dream by Emma Lou Diemer

Preparation and Presentation

Context: pieces that are helpful to have experienced or played before approaching this one

- E Dorian with Modulation by Robert Vandall
- Reaching Out by Emma Lou Diemer
- *Pictures*, Op. 3 (3rd movement) "Parade" by Diane Goolkasian Rahbee
- Hand Over Hand by Emma Lou Diemer
- General technique of hands crossing over one another

Get Ready: creative activities to explore before the first encounter with the score to prepare a student for deeper engagement and more immediate success

- Discover and discuss the background of Emma Lou Diemer with the student (specifically mentioning extended piano techniques)
- Practice hand-over-hand technique in five-finger patterns, arpeggios, and chords in all keys (adapt to simple open fifth pattern at the beginning, as needed)
- Discuss creative ways of notating extended techniques; compare the student's ideas to the ways Diemer notates this.
- Look inside a grand piano and study the structure and layout (strings, how hammers strike the strings, location of the tuning pins, etc.); discover how the sound changes when the strings are dampened.

Initial Focus: features to pay attention to first; priority steps in reading and absorbing the music

- Learn the piano keyboard notes first, ideally chunking each hand with the correct fingering; do this without the pedal
- Play the right hand triangle notes on the keyboard (ms. 3-4) so the student can hear the pitch first without it being dampened
- Figure out if the student will need to stand to dampen the strings or can remain sitting (depends on torso, arm, and leg length)
- Split the piece into 4-measure sections and combine the keyboard with the dampened strings portion in each section
- Watch a recording of the piece together or perform the piece in its entirety for the student

Coordination Essentials: physical skills and drills for common technical challenges in the piece

- If the student can remain seated and strum, they will need to move the bench closer to the piano and learn to play much closer than normal
- If the student needs to stand and strum, they will need to stand while keeping the tempo and feeling the choreography of the left hand in and out of the piano and keyboard
- Practice hand-over-hand intervals in a piano dynamic range; keep fingers curved and go down quickly into the key to produce a rich, deep tone
- Block the chords hands together (in keyboard-playing measures), moving to the downbeat of the next measure
- Play the keyboard measures with a small crescendo to keep the music moving forward (listening to the energy from one note to the next)

Expressivity: ideas to connect with the expressive and musical nature of the piece

- Reflect on the title of “Echo Dream.” Why might the composer have chosen this title? What makes it feel dreamlike? What part could the “echo” in the title be referring to?
- Consider the following prompts:
 - How would the world’s greatest concert pianist play this piece?
 - What can you do to make the piece 100 times more interesting?
 - How can you create a feeling of moving forward throughout the piece?
 - Find more ideas at classicalguitarshed.com/questions/
- Play the piece without the sustain pedal and understand the difference of what the pedal adds to the piece
- Discuss what gestures the student may use at the ends of larger phrases or the end of the piece to make it match the quiet, gentle nature

Look Forward: approaches to set up for success with refinements that will need attention a few weeks down the road

- Continue blocking the intervals in each hand alone and hands together to keep the memory strong
- Identify the chords/harmonies in each measure
- Teach the student how to clean off the strings after each practice session
- Have the student try the piece on a different grand piano (the student will need to analyze the barring of the piano quickly prior to playing and make any adjustments)