



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Inspires digital resource

Kaden Larson Presents: Impromptus Op. 5 Nos. 5-6 by Sibelius

Preparation and Presentation

Context: pieces that are helpful to have experienced or played before approaching this one
For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 5:

- Pieces with “windy” effects and/or lots of leggiero or sweeping motions
- Debussy – Arabesque No. 1, L. 66
- Pieces with octave reach fast 16th notes while maintaining a melody on top
- Schumann – Aufschwung (Fantasiestücke), Op. 12 No. 2
- Chopin – Etude in A-flat, Op. 25 No. 1 (at least trying it)

For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 6:

- Pieces with ostinato bass, such as Nocturnes
- Chorale-type homophonic pieces
- Chopin – Prelude in C minor, Op. 28 No. 20
- Schumann – Norse Song (Album for the Young), Op. 68 No. 41

For both:

- Other Sibelius pieces; there are many that are easy but capture his open, modal, free style such as 5 Pieces, Op. 75 “The Trees”

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

For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 5:

- Listen to Saint-Saëns’ The Aquarium
- Improvise with augmented 7th chords and half-diminished 7th chords

For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 6:

- Sibelius reused themes from Nights of Jealousy – a melodrama for narrator, vocalise soprano, and piano trio – for these two pieces. Give it a listen!

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

For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 5:

- Big sections
- Where are the texture changes?
- Where are the changes in harmonic areas?

For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 6:

- Identify big sections; primarily, the key change
- Identify textural balance; LH ostinato rhythm and gesture, RH melody

For both: there's a balance to be found between soundscape / static stillness, and sudden (though often subtle) changes of scene. Listen and discuss.

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

For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 5:

- Slow note plucking to get a crystalline leggiero sound
- Wrist circles of contrary motion for both hands

For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 6:

- LH wrist circles
- RH down-up movements in connection with phrasing, especially when there are lighter eighth notes passing between longer melodic tones

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

For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 5:

- Watch the opening scene of the movie "Living" – a beautiful historical drama about the story about the bureaucratic battle to redevelop a World War II bomb site into a children's playground. This piece is used as the opening music score.

For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 6:

- Listen to another recording of this piece and have the student draw out either a picture of what they hear, or a graphic score, based on the rising and falling of the melody, the color changes, or any other elements that stand out to them.

For both:

- Listen to or play through the earlier Impromptus in this set. While not as popular, and possibly not as musically inventive, they set up an introspective sound world that must be felt before it can be played. Discuss the nature of folk music and what folk elements are heard.

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

For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 5:

- Reduce the piece to a harmonic chord progression and play it. Listen to the unprepared dissonances, the resting/pedal harmonies, and the places where the harmonic rhythm moves more quickly.

For Impromptu Op. 5 No. 6:

- Identify phrase beginnings and endings; this piece needs long melodic lines. Identify parts of the RH that are texturally in the background.