A SURVEY OF ELEMENTARY PIANO REPERTOIRE: 
A PIANO INSTRUCTOR’S RESOURCE

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This project opens with the premise that some piano instructors are unaware of or don’t have immediate access to elementary literature written by notable composers over the last few centuries. At times, this can lead to a student learning only from methods, resulting in a keyboard education that may lack the diversity of styles and challenges that supplemental pieces can provide.

In this document, I will present an overview of important composers who contributed to repertoire at the elementary level. Beginning with Bach and his contemporaries, I will write a short discussion on the background of each composer, provide a few short examples, and discuss the works in question. I will stress the importance of teaching such repertoire to elementary students and argue that this exposure will better equip them as they move on to more advanced styles of playing.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this project is to expand a piano teacher’s knowledgebase of available keyboard repertoire, with particular regards to elementary pieces. Currently, the market is flooded with various piano methods, many of which feature attractive covers and colorful illustrations. These methods are popular and widely used, and piano teachers rely on them heavily to instruct beginner-level students. While these methods have their applications and strengths, they rarely include original pieces written by major composers such as Schumann, Bartók, or Kabalevsky. If a piano teacher were to rely exclusively on these methods, their students may study for years without delving into the great wealth of elementary pieces written by such composers.

Many of the major publishers, such as Kjos, Hal Leonard, Alfred, and FJH Music, have published compilations that contain original pieces by various composers, and these volumes have been very well received. Such volumes include Louis Köhler’s Sonatina Album¹, Keith Snell’s Essential Piano Repertoire² series, and Bastien’s Piano Literature³ series, among others. However, even these volumes provide teachers only a snapshot of elementary works that are available to them, and only a small percentage of piano teachers actually make use of these collections.

This project differs from other repertoire books, as it narrows the focus down to elementary literature. A work with this particular aim has yet to be written, and I argue that focusing on elementary literature may be one of the most important levels to address. It is only at this level where teachers have the ability to rest solely on piano methods. It is then easy for a teacher to assign only pieces from within that method. However, when a student graduates from one of these methods and reaches the intermediate level, it is then expected that they are ready to play standard piano literature. However, if a teacher relies too heavily on piano

² Keith Snell, Ed., Essential Piano Repertoire (San Diego: Kjos Music Company, 2007)
methods, this transition might be the student’s first introduction to standard literature, for which they would be unprepared. I argue that it is never too early to introduce a student to elementary literature written by past and current composers. Such an introduction will prepare students for contrasts found in different eras, introduce them to the unique styles of various composers, and expose them to other instructive elements that may not be found in their particular method.

This project is designed to encourage and make the process of seeking out elementary piano literature easier for a piano teacher. It will allow the instructor to go directly to the source of a composer’s literature, rather than finding it within the confines of the current methods and compilations. My methodology is to present representative samples by important contributors to elementary piano literature, discuss their background, style of writing, and present examples of their works. I will also point teachers towards particular opus numbers or named collections, so they may seek out pieces on their own. Throughout the course of this project, the reader will have references to a large number of pieces suitable for the elementary student. I will organize the composers by era and will provide a short introduction for each era.

Part of the criteria for choosing the composers in this project rested upon the teachers’ ability to access their works online or in print. Inevitably, a large number of composers who wrote quality works at the elementary level were not included either because their works are out of print, or difficult to obtain in the United States. In this sense, the scope of this project is not exhaustive, but rather practical in nature and geared towards modern day piano teachers who might not necessarily have access to substantial library resources.

What makes a piece elementary as opposed to intermediate?

The terms “elementary” and “intermediate” piano literature will be used often in this project. There is certainly a grey area between the two terms, and you may find slightly different answers among scholars in distinguishing between the two. In this project, I am using a few ways to differentiate between elementary and intermediate literature. First, the complexity of
the texture in a particular piece is considered. For example, Bach’s inventions would be considered an intermediate piece, as the lines are more individual, moving independently from one another. In contrast, the pieces found in the *Anna Magdalena Notebook* lend themselves well to an elementary student, as they often contain slower melodic lines accompanied by simple harmonies. Other examples include the differences found between the complexities of Clementi sonatinas versus the two Beethoven sonatinas. While the Clementi sonatinas are considered to be early intermediate pieces, the two of Beethoven sonatinas, Anh.5 Nos 1 & 2, are considered to be at the late elementary level. The longer note values, decreased range, and leaner texture make these pieces ideal for a beginner student. (figure 1.1).

![Allegro assai.

Sonate No.38.](image)

Figure 1.1: Beethoven Sonatina in F Major, Anh. No. 2

Another benchmark to consider is whether a student has graduated from their piano method. If the student is still studying out of a basic method, such as *Bastien Piano Basics* or *Piano Adventures*, I would consider them an elementary student. Once they have moved past a particular method, I would consider the student having entered the intermediate level.
What about adult students?

Some publishers write separate methods designed specifically for adult students. Some of these differences include a more accelerated pace, an “all-in-one” approach (offering lesson, theory, and recital material in one book), and a different style of language when explaining concepts. However, given the fact that the vast majority of the literature in this project is comprised of standalone pieces, and not part of any method or gradation system, I will not use age as a factor when discussing the pieces in this project.
Chapter 2: The Baroque Era

The term *baroque* is partly derived from the word *barocco* – meaning bizarre – and was used in the nineteenth century to describe the highly ornate designs of religious and public buildings throughout Western Europe. The term has since evolved to the world *baroque*, which is now used to describe the period of music written roughly between 1600 and 1750. Important composers of this era include Johann Sebastian Bach, Antonio Vivaldi, George Frideric Handel, Claudio Monteverdi, Domenico Scarlatti, Louis-Claude Daquin, and many others. In this section, I will touch on the composers whose works contributed significantly to elementary keyboard literature.

Composers of this era generally earned their living through the patronage of a court, church, or aristocracy rather than through performances or the sale of their compositions. Johann Sebastian Bach, for example, worked for patrons and religious institutions as an organist, composer, and music director. Louis-Claude Daquin held a number of court positions as an organist, including the primary organist for King Louis the XV and the principal organist of the Notre Dame Cathedral. Many composers were also aware of each other’s works and would travel great miles to meet one another. They would also often borrow from each other’s themes and employ them in their own compositions.4

Various forms of music were established during the Baroque era, including the concerto, sonata, fugue, toccata, oratorio, and various dance forms. The use of basso continuo was also prevalent, in which a bass line was furnished with a “figure”, which supplied musicians with the implied harmonies. Improvisation above such figures was prevalent and encouraged.5 More important to keyboard music was the use of *counterpoint*, in which musical themes or subjects

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were stated and then repeated in an imitative and interweaving fashion. This technique was used in many of Bach’s compositions, but is primarily seen in his inventions, sinfonias, and fugues.

When assigning a Baroque-era piece to an elementary student, there are certain parameters to consider. The number of lines present, for example, should be limited to two voices, as the texture of a three-voice piece would be too thick for a beginner. Even among two-voice works, one must examine how independent the voices are. For example, as mentioned earlier, the independent lines of a Bach invention would prove to be much more difficult than the slow horizontal lines found within the pieces of the Anna Magdalena Notebook. The length of the piece, tempo, range, and the width of intervals are also important elements to consider.

Bach wrote 15 inventions (two subjects) and 15 sinfonias (three subjects) for the instruction of his son, Wilhelm Friedman Bach. These pieces are short, and both forms include a subject alongside a second or third countersubject. The vast majority of Bach’s contrapuntal writing, however, came in the form of a fugue. A fugue (Italian word for flight) was a strict form written for a certain number of voices, or subjects. A subject would be accompanied by a countersubject, which would usually enter after the statement of the main theme. These voices would then be repeated in various keys, transpositions, fragments, episodes, and inversions. Most of Bach’s fugues appear in the two volumes of his Well-Tempered Clavier, both of which include 24 preludes and fugues, one in every major and minor key. Bach’s ability to write counterpoint was unmatched, and he would often improvise fugues at the organ. Bach’s fugues, however, like his inventions, are intermediate or advanced works, and not appropriate for the elementary student.

Another commonly used form in the Baroque era was the dance suite. While inspired by dances, the suites were primarily for listening, rather than accompanying dances. In contrast to sonatas, dance suites were grouped into five or more movements, all in binary form and all in
the same key signature. Bach’s *Six French Suites*, *Six English Suites*, and *Six Partitas* essentially formalized the order into four distinct movements: the *allemande*, *courante/corrente*, *sarabande*, and *gigue*. A *prelude* was optional, and typically, an optional dance was inserted between the *sarabande* and the *gigue*. The dances generally follow these traits:

**Prelude**: The optional *prelude* was in free form, but generally contrasted the allemande in mood and style.

**Allemande**: The *allemande* is in 4/4 meter, set in a moderate tempo, and usually includes an upbeat. The movement is known for its German origin, as the term is French for “German”.

**Corrente**: The Italian *corrente* is a lively courtship dance characterized by a light and quick upper line. Its French counterpart, the *courante*, is not as fast and includes dotted rhythms characteristic of the French court. Both dances are set in 3/4 meter.

**Sarabande**: The *sarabande* is a slow dance with Spanish origins set in 3/4 meter. The dance was banned in Spain for its eroticism, but was later popularized in the Baroque era as a slow movement to the dance suite.

In between the *sarabande* and *gigue*, Bach would include one or more optional dances. These dances might include the following:

**Minuet**: A 3/4 meter dance of French origin. The *minuet* is one of the most commonly used dance movements of the Baroque era.

**Gavotte**: A moderately fast court dance set in 4/4 or 2/2 meter with French origins. The movement usually includes an upbeat of two quarter notes or one half note.

**Bourrée**: A dance of French origins, this duple meter movement is fast and lively, usually preceded by an upbeat.

**Passepied**: Set in 3/4 meter, this French dance resembles a *minuet*, but in a faster tempo.
Polonaise: This dance was used from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century to open a court ball or other royalty functions. The dance has Polish origins and is set in triple meter.

Chaconne or Ciaccona: Similar to the sarabande, in 3/4 meter with Spanish origins, this dance consists of a harmonic sequence over a repeated bass line.

Passacaglia: Similar to the chaconne, this dance is also set over a set of repeating bass lines. This movement also has Spanish origins, and the names of these two dances were sometimes interchangeable.

Gigue: The final movement of the suite, this fast and energetic dance has its origins from the jig, a Scottish dance. This dance is in compound meters, such as 6/8 or 12/8, and usually has an eighth note upbeat.

Some individual dances listed above (such as simplified minuets, gavottes, and polonaises) are suitable for elementary teaching, especially those found in the Anna Magdalena Notebook.

Recommended Further Reading:

Piano Repertoire Guide, Cathy Albergo and Reid Alexander

Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard, Paul Badura-Skoda

Bach, Johann Sebastian

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was born in Eisenach into a large family of musicians. His musical ancestry can be traced back to his great-great-grandfather, a mill worker who played the lute.\(^6\) Bach began his musical studies on the violin with his father. After

a decade, however, both of Bach’s parents died, and he went to live with his brother, Johann Christoph, with whom he studied keyboard.

At the young age of 18, Bach took a position as the organist at the Bonifatiuskirche in Arnstadt. He went on to obtain organist positions in Mühlhausen (1707-1708) and Weimer (1708-1717). From 1717 to 1723, he served as the Kapellmeister for Prince Leopold at Köthen. During this time, Bach composed many of his secular pieces, including The Little Organ Book, the first volume of The Well-Tempered Clavier, and the Brandenburg Concertos. The Bach family practiced their faith piously, and Bach stated that he wrote his music: “For the glory of the most high God,” an inscription found in his Little Organ Book.7

While Bach did not write music specifically for beginning students, many pieces found in the Anna Magdalena Notebook are well suited for the elementary pianist. It was a common practice in that era for a composer to have a household notebook for his or her family to study from or contribute to. The notebook in the Bach household was compiled for the study and practice of Bach’s second wife, Anna Magdalena. Comprised of two volumes, begun in 1722 and 1725, the notebook contains works by Couperin, Stolzel, Petzold, Hasse, and other contemporaries of Bach. Scholars also believe that Anna Magdalena herself or other family members also wrote some of the pieces.8 The notebook contains pieces in a variety of forms, including suites, arias, chorals, and individual dances, mainly in the French galant style which was favored by Anna Magdalena. We also find Bach’s own contributions to the notebook, most notably his French Suites, found in the first volume. The second volume contains the bulk of the elementary dances that will be discussed here, many of which were designed as teaching pieces.

The popular “Minuet in G Major” (figure 2.1), found in the 1725 manuscript, is a commonly used teaching piece and often transcribed for other instruments. A less popular piece in the same

7 Ibid
manuscript, the “Minuet in G Minor”, (figure 2.2), is often taught as a pair with the “Minuet in G”, as they possess striking similarities. In addition to being set in G, they both contain rhythmic and stepwise motives (see measures 5 and 6). A teacher could present these pieces to help an elementary pianist develop their skills in hand position changes, Baroque style articulations, and the use of tasteful dynamics. In terms of teaching ornaments to a younger student, the process should be done gradually. One approach would be to leave out the ornaments found on the faster notes, while keeping the ornaments on the quarter notes; this would make the execution of ornaments more in line with a contemporary student’s ability and level.

Another valuable piece in the Notebook is BWV Anh. 116, the “Minuet in G Major” (figure 2.3). This piece, opening with a G major arpeggio, can show the student how to approach the
wider interval of an octave. This piece also contains call and response figures, variations in articulation and dynamics, and other elements, which makes this work a fine teaching resource.

Another well-known collection of pieces that are appropriate for students is *First Lessons in Bach*, a collection compiled by the British scholar Walter Carroll (1869-1955) and first published in 1908. A number of different publishers have released this popular collection. The collection contains works from the *Anna Magdalena Notebook*, but also individual movements from several of Bach’s suites and overtures, including his French and English suites. These dance movements include minuets, gavottes, and polonaises. The collection, published in two parts, contains pieces appropriate for both elementary and intermediate students. An example of a dance found in the collection can be seen in figure 2.4 from Bach’s *Overture in G minor*.
Carroll’s selections were originally published in two sets, totaling 28 pieces. The collection is an important resource as it brings together elementary and intermediate pieces that are found throughout Bach’s extensive keyboard output.

**Recommended Editions:**

*Selections from The Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach*, Edited by Christos Tsitsaros, Schirmer Performance Edition

*First Lessons in Bach*, Edited by Christos Tsitsaros, Schirmer Performance Edition

Scarlatti, Domenico

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757) was born in Naples, into a household of musicians, most notably his father, Alessandro Scarlatti. Scarlatti began his keyboard studies at an early age, and accepted his first appointment as an organist-composer at the Chapel Royal of Naples at the age of 15. In 1704, he moved to Rome, where he composed operas and chamber music for the private theater of the exiled queen of Poland. While living in Rome, he met several prominent musicians, including Handel, with whom he engaged in friendly contests at the keyboard. The legend concludes that Handel outplayed Scarlatti at the organ, while Scarlatti was superior at the harpsichord.9

Scarlatti composed over 555 sonatas, some of which he called essercizi (exercises). Musicologists believe that many of these sonatas were written as teaching pieces for the princess (and later queen) of Spain, to whom he was employed during the later years of his life.10 Although we certainly find elements of traditional forms in his writing, Scarlatti often strayed from these norms. According to an early biographer, Philip Hale, Scarlatti’s keyboard works were ahead of his time: “Paying little attention to formalism, [he had] little regard for fugal construction, dance foundations of the suite, [or] contrapuntal traditions.”11

A number of Scarlatti’s sonatas are titled after and contain the characteristics of dance movements. A good example is the “Minuetto in C Major,” found in figure 2.5. This piece consists of broken chords with narrow leaps in the right hand, supported by a line of single notes – usually the tonic of the chord – in the left hand. The medium tempo of the minuetto affords the student time to work out the chords and lines.

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11 Philip Hale, Twenty-two Pieces for the Piano: Domenico Scarlatti (New York: Schirmer, 1895)
Sonata K. 32 (figure 2.6), another fine teaching piece, contains a slow, although complex, melody in the right hand, supported by mostly block chords in the left hand. While students playing dance movements are encouraged to accentuate the rhythmic quality of the dance, this piece requires students to bring out elements that one might find in a sensitive vocal line. Even the trills should be played in the style of a vocalist.
Given the diversity, quantity, and progressive nature of Scarlatti’s output, his works are an essential component of a student’s introduction to the Baroque era. Scarlatti did not write a collection of sonatas specifically for the elementary level. Therefore, I have suggested contemporary publications that contain some of the easier sonatas that are suitable for elementary students.

**Recommended Editions:**

*Scarlatti: An Introduction to His Keyboard Works, Alfred Edition*

*12 Easy Scarlatti Sonatas, Hal Leonard Edition*

*Scarlatti: First Book for Pianists, Alfred Edition*
Handel, George Frederic

George Frederic Handel (1685-1759) was a German-born composer known primarily for his operas, oratorios, organ concerti, and instrumental overtures. He moved to Italy in 1706 to study with Corelli and returned to Germany in 1710, where he was a court composer in Hanover. Two years later at the age of 27, he moved to England, earning his English citizenship, and resided there until his death. He is recognized as the founder of the English oratorio, of which he wrote 29, including the popular *Elijah* and *Messiah*.

Because of his travels, Handel’s keyboard music contains elements of both German and Italian styles. Charles Burney, one of Handel’s early biographers, describes Handel’s keyboard music as having the “profundity and learned art of the Germans with Italian grace and lightness.” The bulk of Handel’s keyboard music is in his 16 keyboard suites, including the “Eight Great,” HWV 426-433. The suites are collections of dance movements set in the traditional allemande–courante–sarabande–gigue form. Handel describes these suites as “lessons,” which he wrote to “serve a nation from which [he] had received so gracious a protection.”

There are a number a pieces within the suites that lend themselves well in teaching the elementary pianist. Among these are the “Adagio” from *Suite II*, the “Sarabande” from *Suite IV*, the “Sarabande” and “Passacallie” from *Suite VII*, the “Sarabande” from *Suite X*, the “Sarabande” from *Suite XI*, the “Sarabande” from *Suite XII*, the “Chaconne” from *Suite XII*, and the “Menuette” from *Suite XV*, to name only a few. In fact, as nearly every suite contains pieces suitable for the elementary pianist, it is worth the instructor’s time and resources to invest in procuring the entire collection.

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The “Sarabande” from *Suite VII* (figure 2.7) is a particularly nice place to start when introducing a student to Handel. The tempo is slow, and the piece is comprised mostly of diatonic triads in root position. As a result, this work could prove useful when introducing a student to the rudiments of music theory. Secondary dominants, passing tones, and suspensions are different elements that a student can identify in this piece.

![Sarabande](image)

Figure 2.7: “Sarabande” from Suite VII

At times, Handel strays from the formal dance suite by adding non-traditional movements, such as the adagio or passacaille. He was also keen on writing his movements in the theme and variation forms, another departure from the traditional suite. For example, the “Sarabande” from *Suite XII*, a familiar piece, is in theme and variation form (figure 2.8).
Handel also wrote a number of Minuets at the elementary level. Many of these resemble the style and level of those written by Bach and Mozart. In measure 5 of this “Minuet in F Major” (figure 2.9), Handel spells out what appears to be a trill in sixteenth notes, making this piece a good place to start when introducing a student to such ornaments.
In his lifetime, Handel's keyboard music was more popular and distributed more widely than that of Bach or Scarlatti. However, starting in the nineteenth century, his keyboard music became overshadowed by his contemporaries. Regardless, Handel's music has much to offer for elementary students and remains to this day a largely untapped resource consisting of many fine pedagogical works.

**Suggested Editions:**

*Handel: Suites, Volumes 1-8, Kalmus Edition*

*Handel: Suites and Chaconnes, Volumes 9-16, Kalmus Edition*

*Handel: Piano Suites, London 1720, Henle Edition*

**Daquin, Louis-Claude**

Louis-Claude Daquin (1694-1772) was born in Paris and attained great success as a virtuoso organist and harpsichordist. A child prodigy, Daquin performed for Louis XIV at the age of six and received his first organist position at the *Sainte-Chapelle* at the age of 12. Daquin went on to hold a number of important positions, including the organist for King Louis the XV in 1739 at the Chapelle Royale and the principal organist at the Notre Dame Cathedral in 1755.\(^{15}\)

Daquin gained a reputation as a virtuoso organist and is considered the preeminent virtuoso of his generation.\(^{16}\) Daquin wrote and played in the French *galant* style, characterized by heavy ornamentation, the majority of which was improvised. Within these improvised figures, however, there was a system to their execution. One of the earliest and most thorough explanations on how to execute these ornaments can be found in Daquin’s *Pièces de Clavecin* (*Pieces for Keyboard*), a collection of 28 pieces in four suites. In the forward and introduction,


\(^{16}\) Ibid
Daquin explains in great length how trills or other ornaments should be executed. The pieces in this collection begin at the elementary level and eventually progress to early advanced pieces.

Daquin dedicated the work to Mademoiselle de Soubise, a student of his and the governess of Louis XV’s ten children. The dedication page is seen in figure 2.10.

![Dedication page to Mademoiselle de Soubise](image)

**Figure 2.10:** Dedication page to Mademoiselle de Soubise

Daquin then provides examples of ornaments, along with directions on their interpretation. Figure 2.11 shows a copy of one of the original pages, written in French, where Daquin spells out how to interpret an ornament, in this case the “port de voix,” which is a mordent preceded by an appoggiatura.
Figure 2.11: Daquin's description of the “port de voix,”

The same passage, edited and translated, appears below in figure 2.12:

![Image of the translation]

The “Port de Voix” explanation in English

Figure 2.12: The “Port de Voix” explanation in English

Figure 2.13 is an excerpt from the second piece of the first suite titled “1er Rigaudon en Rondeau” (“First Rigadoon in Rondo”).

![Image of the musical notation]

Figure 2.13: “1er Rigaudon en Rondeau”
While the texture of this piece is thin, the lively tempo of this cut time dance will provide some challenges to the beginning student. As with every piece in the set, Daquin is liberal with his use of ornamentation, allowing the opportunity to implement his detailed instructions. As mentioned before, the process of leaving out the ornaments on faster notes, while including them on slower notes is an effective way to introduce ornaments to a student. This work contains multiple mordents. While they alone are not particularly difficult, in measure 4, there is a mordent set against a trill. In this case, the trill should probably be left out for an elementary student.

In the fourth suite, we find a rondeau (figure 2.14), in which the two hands play a third apart from each other with a sparse use of ornaments. This piece would be ideal in teaching the mordent and the trill, as they are infrequent and appear only on long notes. This gives the student ample time to interpret the ornaments without being rushed.

![La Curée: Fanfare](image)

**Figure 2.14:** Rondeau, from the fourth suite

Daquin’s *Pièces de Clavecin* is largely appropriate for any late elementary to intermediate student, especially those interested in learning the art of ornamentation.
Recommended Editions:

*Pièces de Clavecin*, Boosey and Hawkes Edition

Hook, James

James Hook (1746-1827) was an English organist and harpsichordist known primarily for his works written for the stage. A child prodigy, he began his stage career at the age of four. Hook supplemented his income by giving keyboard lessons. His dedication to teaching eventually led him to write *Guida di Musica* (*Guide to Music*), which was published circa 1785. The full title of the book was:

*Guida di Musica being a Complete Book of Instructions for Beginners on the Harpsichord or Piano Forte, entirely on a new Plan, calculated to save a great deal of time & trouble both to Master & Scholar, to which is added Twenty-Four Progressive-Lessons in various Keys, with the Fingering mark'd throughout.*

A book of this kind – with a pedagogical approach centered on starting at the very beginning with note values, note names, fingering, and many more aspects – represents one of the earliest and most comprehensive pedagogical books written to that point. The impetus behind the book may have come out of frustration with the ways in which early keyboard instruction was conducted. This is evidenced by the following excerpt in the preface:

I have often with regret observed how much of the Master’s time has been spent in writing Lessons and Examples for their young Pupils, which might have been so much better employed in their instruction, particularly at Schools where the time allotted for each is but short to obviate this inconvenience I have put together the following instructions and hope they will be found convenient to the Master and useful to the Scholar, by saving the time of the former and consequently expediting the improvement of the latter.  

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An excerpt from page two shows Hook’s detailed approach when explaining keyboard fundamentals to students (figure 2.15):

![Figure 2.15: A page from James Hook’s introduction](image)

Page four follows up with an explanation of rhythmic figures (figure 2.16):

![Figure 2.16: James Hook’s explanation of rhythmic figures](image)

What follows are 24 pieces carefully graded from elementary through early intermediate levels. It is important to understand that fingering then was notated differently than it is today; the ‘+’ was the symbol for the thumb, while finger 1 represented what we now know as the index finger, or finger 2. Below is an excerpt from “Lesson X” (figure 2.17):

![Figure 2.17: An excerpt from “Lesson X”](image)
Figure 2.18 is a modern publication of “Lesson II,” a minuet. Although the first three lessons in the book are centered around a C Major tonality, Hook wrote each in a different hand position. In this case we find the RH based on Locrian mode and the LH based on Lydian mode.

James Hook’s *Guida di Musica* was one of the most comprehensive pedagogical materials written since Couperin’s *Pièces de Clavecin* (1706). It set a high standard that was not approached until 1851 with Ferdinand Beyer’s *Vorschule im Kavierspiel*.
Recommended Editions:

Essential Piano Repertoire, Edited by Keith Snell, Kjos Publishing.

The complete *Guida di Musica* is currently out of print. A copy of the score can be found online at the International Music Score Library Project (imslp.org)
Chapter 3: The Classical Era

The Classical era, defined roughly as 1750 to 1830, is characterized by a change in style, form, and instrumentation from the preceding Baroque era. The compositions of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, later recognized as the first Viennese School, dominated the works of this period. In terms of style, the serious complexity of the Baroque era gave way to a light *gallant* style, a term that refers to a lighter, graceful melodic line, supported with a light accompaniment.\(^{19}\) During the classical era, the three-movement sonata rose in prominence as the most commonly used form in keyboard works. Another important progression in this era was the development of the keyboard instrument itself. Around 1700, Bartolomeo Cristofori invented the *pianoforte*, allowing musicians to play the keyboard with varying dynamic levels. This was a significant difference from the harpsichord, which allowed for no such variation. The *pianoforte* continued to develop and improve as manufacturers added pedals and expanded its range. These changes allowed composers to write more specific contrasts into the score. We see this progression reflected in the writings of the composers themselves. With the advent and popular use of the *pianoforte* in the early 19\(^{th}\) century, Beethoven was able to include more detailed pedal markings and other idiomatic specifications in his late piano works.\(^{20}\)

It is important to note that while the sonata was the dominant form of the time, certain dances, such as the minuet, were still widely employed. These dances, along with sonatinas (miniature sonatas), could be appropriate places to start when seeking out piano music for elementary students.

As an instructor searches for elementary classical literature, there are a number of elements to consider which will differentiate elementary from intermediate levels. The texture of an elementary piece, for example, will most often contain a simple melody line with a straightforward chordal accompaniment, such as Alberti bass. Other technical aspects to


consider are the width of intervals, as the size of the hand varies from student to student. Rhythmic complexity is also important to note. The first movement (Allegretto) of Beethoven's “Sonatina in G Major”, for example (figure 3.1), moves at a moderate tempo without any fast or complex scale work, making it ideal for a late elementary student.

![Allegretto](image)

Figure 3.1: Sonatina in G Major, Anh. No. 1

The tempo and length of the piece represent other aspects to consider on a case-by-case basis. A quick tempo does not always disqualify it from being taught at the elementary level, and the same logic applies to the length of a piece. It is also important to note the character of the piece. Some pieces may seem elementary at first glance, but it may take a more mature individual to bring out the nuances found between the lines.

Following these suggestions, an instructor should be able to find appropriate literature within collections of dances, sonatinas, and other forms. The Classical era contains an abundance of literature appropriate for the student pianist. It is well worth the instructors’ time to examine and seek out repertoire appropriate for their students.
Haydn, Joseph

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) spent much of his career (1761-1790) under the patronage of the Esterhazy court in Hungary. However, given the court's rural surroundings, Haydn felt isolated. In a letter to his brother, he said it “forced him to become original.”\(^{21}\) His output there was highly prolific, as he used the time to refine both the symphony and the string quartet. By the 1780s, Haydn was one of the most famous and celebrated composers in central Europe.\(^{22}\) In 1791, Haydn was “freed” from his service at Esterhazy. After four years in London, he eventually moved to Vienna, where he enjoyed great success as a composer of oratorios, masses, and string quartets. By the time of his death, Haydn had written 106 symphonies and is now recognized as the first of the Viennese classics (along with Mozart and Beethoven).

Haydn’s output for keyboard is comprised of at least 51 piano sonatas as well as many other works, including variations and single movement pieces. While his sonatas are generally considered intermediate or advanced works, many of the single movement pieces are well suited for the late elementary pianist.

The “Menuet and Trio” from the *Divertimento in C major, Hoboken XVI:1* (figure 3.2) is a fine late elementary piece. In this piece, the student is presented with basic ornamentations, such as the trill and a grace note. There are also many instances with a long note on the downbeat, followed by triplets or quarter notes. These patterns are a good way for the student to learn the style of the *menuet*, which displays a rhythmic emphasis on the first beat. There are also many instances where the triplet figures extend beyond a five-finger pattern, challenging the student to find alternative positions and fingerings.


Another piece suitable for a mid- to late-elementary student is the “Scherzo in F Major” from the “Divertimento in F Major,” Hoboken XVI:9 (figure 3.3). While this piece might appear to be more advanced at first glance, the eighth notes simply outline broken chord inversions and partial scales. This work is another example of how the study of scales and chord inversions can prepare a student for a work of this level. The left hand is also very attainable for a young student, as it consists mostly of harmonic thirds or fifths and is situated within a one-octave range. The light character of this scherzo, written with simple harmonies and hand positions, makes it an excellent introduction to Haydn’s keyboard works.
Because Haydn did not write a treatise or collection of elementary works, compilation volumes are the best places to find these sections. I encourage piano teachers to look through the suggested editions that are listed below.

**Suggested Editions:**

*Haydn: And Introduction to His Keyboard Works, Alfred Edition*

*Haydn: 10 Easy Sonatas, Schott Edition*

*Haydn: 6 Sonatinas, Alfred Edition*

**Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was born in Salzburg into a family of musicians. The most notable of these were his father Leopold and his sister Marianne (“Nannerl”). Mozart’s talent for music was apparent from the age of three. By the age of four, he was
playing minuets taught by his father, and the following year he began composing minuets. He composed his first symphony at the age of eight.\(^{23}\) Some of Mozart’s earliest documented pieces, “K. 1-5”, were written at the age of five and were recorded in the family’s *Nannerl Notebook*. This household music notebook contains works by various composers, including Leopold and Nannerl.

Recognizing the talent in both of his children, Leopold arranged several European tours, where they were welcomed enthusiastically as child prodigies. During these tours, which spanned nearly ten years, the Mozart children played for nobility, such as the Empress Maria Theresa of France, and met with prominent composers, most notably Johann Christian Bach.\(^{24}\) Mozart’s first published works were two pairs of sonatas for the keyboard and violin, “K. 6-9”, which were published in 1764 when Mozart was eight years old.\(^{25}\)

The bulk of Mozart’s elementary works were written when he was young; some of his earliest compositions were entered in the *Nannerl Notebook*, which was compiled by Leopold Mozart and presented to Nannerl in 1759 as a tool to further her harpsichord skills. In subsequent years, Wolfgang’s early pieces were torn out of the notebook and grouped together as KV 1 and 2. The following example, “Minuet in F Major, K. 2” (figure 3.4) was written in Salzburg sometime between January and July of 1762 when Mozart was six years old.\(^{26}\)


\(^{26}\) ibid
This popular minuet shows a striking level of maturity for the writing of a six-year old. The piece was written in classic ternary form, divided into four-bar phrases. As a student learns this piece, it is important to point out that the right hand is constructed of broken chords. Teaching a student to recognize intervals and broken chords, rather than working out individual notes alone, can at times speed up the learning process. This piece would also be an ideal work to analyze, as it contains a fully diminished chord in measure nine, a secondary dominant chord in measure 11, and several suspensions (mm. 4, 8, 12, 16).

The “Allegro in B-flat, K. 3,” was written during the same time period and is a piece well suited for the study of articulation (figure 3.5). Separated repeated notes quickly follow the two-note slurs of the opening measures. The light character, thin texture, and straightforward harmonies make this an ideal piece for a beginning piano student.
Mozart went on to write 18 piano sonatas, 23 concertos, 16 sets of variations, and a handful of other keyboard works. His works are now considered core staples in the piano repertoire. These pieces are not only a window into Mozart's early talent, but are also sound pedagogical works worth looking over.

**Recommended Editions:**

- *15 Easy Piano Pieces*, Edited by Elena Abend, Schirmer Performance Edition
- *15 Intermediate Piano Pieces*, Edited by Elena Abend, Schirmer Performance Edition
- *Notebook for Nannerl*, Schott Edition

**Türk, Daniel Gottlob**

Daniel Gottlob Türk (1750-1813), a German theorist and composer, began his keyboard studies with his father. While attending school in Dresden, he studied keyboard lessons with
G.A. Homilius, who was a former pupil of Bach. He also studied with Johann Adam Hiller, who versed him in the latest songs, cantatas, and Singspielen. In 1774, Türk was invited to Halle to be the Kantor at the Ulrichskirche, where he also taught at the local Lutheran Gymnasium. There, he composed symphonies, cantatas, and works for keyboard. In spite of his prolific activity, only his works for keyboard have survived. Five years later, he became director of music at Halle University, and his influence was a major part of the musical life in Halle until his death in 1813.  

Türk’s pedagogical output includes:

*School of Clavier Playing*

*12 Easy Piano Sonatas*

*120 Pieces for Aspiring Pianists*

Concerned that the level of keyboard instruction remain at a high caliber, Türk wrote *The School of Clavier Playing*, a philosophical treatise containing detailed advice on the proper method of keyboard teaching. This work is not trivial in both its breadth and content. The translated book is no shorter than 550 pages. In the introduction of his book, Türk writes:

> Although there are many books on playing the clavichord, some which are very good, a somewhat more complete instructional work for that instrument with critical and illustrative remarks is still lacking … in order to remedy this deficiency … I have engaged in certain investigations in this book of which I would have otherwise spared myself.  

While the *School of Clavier Playing* is a philosophical work, Türk’s *120 Pieces for Aspiring Pianists* is a true keyboard method. It consists of two sets of 60 pieces, which are


graded from the elementary to intermediate level. Below is an example of the first few pieces in the collection (figure 3.6). The simplicity of phrasing, the rhythmic allocation of short notes against long notes, and the narrow range make this an ideal piece for a young student.

Figure 3.6: Introductory pieces from School of Clavier Playing

As the student progresses through the method, the pieces become more complex, with varying rhythms, key signatures, wider intervals, and chromaticism. Below is piece number 30 (figure 3.7), located roughly halfway through the treatise.
Figure 3.7: Piece number 30 from *School of Clavier Playing*

It is interesting to note that Türk titled each of these 120 pieces, making them both etudes and character pieces. The first two are titled, “At First Things are Difficult” and “O Faster, Faster! The Dog Runs Around the Children!” Number 30 is titled, “Practice Makes the Master,” a phrase not far from the English “practice makes perfect.”

Türk’s pieces can now be found in many elementary level compilations, such as *Preparatory Piano Literature* (Faber and Faber), *Piano Literature* (KJOS), *Music for Millions* (Denes Agay), *Masterwork Classics* (Alfred), and *Celebration Series* (Frederick Harris Music).

**Recommended Editions:**

*Handstucke für angehende Klavierspieler (selections).* Edited by Cornelia Auerbach, Masters Music Publications

*Sixty Pieces for Aspiring Players, Books I & II.* Edited by Howard Ferguson, ABRSM Edition
**Beethoven, Ludwig Van**

Beethoven (1770-1827) can be considered an important transitional composer from the Classical to the Romantic era. He excelled in his music studies, first with his father and then with Christian-Gottlob Neefe. At the age of 22, he moved to Vienna, where he quickly made a name for himself as a virtuoso pianist and composer. During his lifetime, he wrote for almost every genre. His works include 32 piano sonatas and 9 symphonies, as well as numerous string quartets, concertos, operas, ballets, and chamber music. The public loved Beethoven so dearly that over 10,000 people lined the streets for his funeral.

Beethoven’s output for elementary music includes:

12 German Dances WoO 8 (also arranged for four hands)

12 German Dances, WoO 13

7 Ländler (Austrian Folk Dances), WoO 11

6 Ecossaises for Piano, WoO 83

Anh. 5, Two Sonatinas: F Major and G Major

“Bagatelle WoO 59, Für Elise”

Our exposure to Beethoven’s elementary literature largely consists of a handful of German dances, “Für Elise,” and the two sonatinas. However, additional German dances, as well as the Ländler and Ecossaises, are worth further exploration.

The characteristics of a German dance include an upbeat tempo, triple meter, and a minuet and trio form. With only a few exceptions, Beethoven’s German dances follow these parameters. “WoO 13, No. 1” (figure 3.8) would make an excellent teaching piece, yet it is overlooked in the vast majority of compilation volumes.

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The opening turns, scale passages, and block chord accompaniments make this piece highly approachable for a student pianist. The Trio section allows the student to focus on parallel thirds, sharp accents, and two-note slurs. This, and other dances within WoO 13, represent constructive pieces an instructor can use when introducing a student to Beethoven's works.

Figure 3.8: German Dance WoO 13, No. 1

Beethoven's Ländler (Austrian Folk Dances) have also received limited attention within modern published literature, but are certainly worth incorporating into one's teaching repertoire. Figure 3.9 is an example from “WoO 11, Ländler No. 2.” In this piece, the LH denotes an exercise in Alberti bass, while the right hand focuses on light staccatos and extended strong beats.
Beethoven wrote a total of six sonatinas, four of which are complex and at the intermediate level. However, his two sonatinas in G major and F major (Anh.5, Nos. 1 and 2) are fitting pieces as a student transitions from the late elementary into the early intermediate level. They are also fine introductions into the sonata form. Both works contain two movements, with the first movement written in sonata-allegro form. Figure 3.10 is from “Sonatina in F Major.”
The easier works of Beethoven are typically overlooked when exploring music for an elementary student due to the overwhelming popularity of his 32 piano sonatas. Moreover, the works in literature compilations are usually limited to the two sonatinas and a few German dances. I hope the works and collections mentioned here will help instructors realize these many options available when teaching Beethoven to an elementary student.

**Suggested Editions:**

*Dances of Beethoven: 19 Pieces to Play Before His Sonatinas*, Edited by Maurice Hinson, Alfred Edition

*Beethoven: Selected Piano Works*, Edited by Matthew Edwards, Schirmer Performance Edition
Jan Ladislav Dussek (1760-1812) was a Czech composer, teacher, and pianist. His technical abilities at the piano gained him a reputation as one of the great virtuosos of his day, and he traveled and performed throughout Europe. He lived in Paris from 1786 to 1789, where he performed and taught piano. It was while here that he made the acquaintance of Marie Antoinette and Napoleon.\(^{31}\)

With the advent of the French revolution, Dussek fled to London, where he remained for 11 years. While in London, he maintained an active teaching and performing career and had a significant influence on the development of the piano itself. The Broadwood Piano Firm, with its desire to gain association with the fashionable pianists of London, expanded the piano from five octaves to six. This move is credited to the influence of Hummel and Dussek. In 1794, Dussek was the first pianist to give a performance on the new six-octave grand piano. He is also credited with being the first pianist to perform with his right profile to the audience, a custom held to this day.\(^{32}\)

While in London, Dussek was also an active piano instructor. For the intermediate pianist, Dussek wrote a number of piano sonatinas. For the elementary pianist, he wrote a series known as *12 Progressive Lessons*.

Many of the works in this collection resemble classical sonatinas, alluding to the fact that Dussek may have been influenced by the works of Haydn and Hummel, with whom he worked very closely. They often feature scale or arpeggio work in the RH, set against an Alberti bass or similarly moving LH figure. One unique feature present in his works, unlike other pieces in the eighteenth century, is the very specific pedal markings.

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In piece No. 2, “Andante sostenuto,” (figure 3.11), Dussek uses an andante tempo while introducing the student to finger legato thirds.

\[ \text{II} \]

Figure 3.11: Piece II from 12 Progressive Lessons

Piece No. 4 (figure 3.12) resembles a more typical sonatina allegro movement. Again, notice the pedal markings. This piece opens with a grand fortissimo chord, followed by rhythmic diminution and a scale based on the dominant up to a piano dynamic mark. In the first phrase, there are full chords with pedal markings, finger-legato scale work, and extreme dynamic and rhythmic variations. In the second phrase there is an expansive melody in which the student is encouraged to use finger legato, providing an opportunity to create a long horizontal line.
As a touring virtuoso, Dussek wrote 13 piano concertos, 29 piano sonatas, and was praised by the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung for his “originality and expressiveness.”\textsuperscript{33} Still, his works have been all but forgotten, and his pieces are rarely performed today. Only a small collection of sonatinas are still in circulation and sometimes performed today. The pieces found in 12 Progressive Lessons represent excellent teaching material and deserve to be taught and heard more often.

**Recommended Edition:**

12 Progressive Lessons is currently out of print. A copy can be found online at the International Music Score Library Project (imslp.org).

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid
Chapter 4: The Romantic Era

The Romantic era began in the early nineteenth century and lasted until about 1910. It was heavily influenced by romanticism, a movement in art, literature, and philosophy that emphasized individuality, a fascination with the supernatural, and “the rejection of everyday reality in favor of the imaginative, the mysterious and the poetic.”

This focus on freedom of expression can be seen in the transformation of musical forms from structured sonatas or dances to freer form works, such as character pieces, nocturnes, etudes, ballades, rhapsodies, and theme and variations.

It was during this time that piano manufacturers continued to develop the structure of the piano, including the further development of the pedal, the modern steel frame, a seven-octave range, and the double-escapement action. Pianists used these enhancements to create new, rich sonorities in their compositions. It was also during this time that the standard piano recital, with the pianist’s profile to the audience, was firmly established. Emphasis was placed on technical prowess, and virtuosos, such as Liszt, Dussek, and Clara Schumann, became especially popular.

Composers also expanded the harmonic language of their works with more chromaticism, modulations to distant keys, and the use of altered chords. With increased lyricism also apparent, many pieces were meant to invoke a character, story, or sentiment. Some of the dominant composers of this time were Schubert, Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Wagner, and Brahms.

Given that keyboard works from the Romantic era contain much more complexity in sound and structure, an instructor must consider certain elements when assigning these pieces to an elementary pianist. These considerations will prove helpful when differentiating an intermediate from an elementary piece. As the use of pedal was dominant in this era, pedal

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36 Ibid
markings should be laid out and must be straightforward. Many students may even encounter pedal for the first time when playing these pieces. The complexity of syncopation is another consideration, and it should be introduced gradually. Before assigning a piece to a particular student, an instructor should analyze various technical aspects, such as the complexity or width of chords, tempo, thickness of the texture, and length of the piece.

The works of some modern composers, such as Eugénie Rocherolle, can introduce elements of the Romantic era to an elementary pianist. Consider the example below, taken from *Pavane* (figure 4.1).

![Figure 4.1: Pavane, by Eugénie Rocherolle](image)

Using the *Pavane*, which was originally a baroque dance, Rocherolle introduces the pianist to many elements seen in the Romantic era, including the use of pedal, extended chords, and a focus on lyricism.
Generally, the educational works of composers such as Gurlitt, Burgmüller, Heller, and Schumann are good starting places when introducing a student to the Romantic era, as their works contain many of this era’s elements in a simpler and more accessible form. The variety of technical elements found within Romantic era pieces will prove invaluable to a pianist’s further studies. However, these should be introduced gradually to give the student ample time to fully internalize the unique elements of this era.

Czerny, Carl

Carl Czerny (1791-1857) is most often associated with the numerous etudes he wrote for the keyboard. However, his impact as an instructor and pianist on the music community of Vienna is often understated. A child prodigy, Czerny performed Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor (K. 491) at the age of nine. He studied with Beethoven from 1801 to 1804, and was selected to perform the premier of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 15 in the same year. Six years later, he performed the premier of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 5, Op. 73 (“Emperor”).

Czerny was a prolific composer, with works numbering over one thousand. He wrote for nearly every genre, including symphonies, chamber music, concertos, songs, choruses, and works for the piano. His piano compositions include nocturnes, sonatas, over 180 variations, and his well-known etudes. Czerny was also one of the early editors of Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier. While the name Czerny is so often associated with etudes, many musicologists are now realizing he may be one of the most overlooked composers of the nineteenth century.

Czerny was a gifted instructor, and some believe him to be one of the great forerunners in the teaching of modern piano technique. Pianists, such as Theodor Leschetizky, Sergei

38 David Gramit, Beyond The Art of Finger Dexterity: Reassessing Carl Czerny, (Boydell & Brewer 2008), 298.
Prokofiev, Arthur Rubinstein, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, and Edwin Fischer, can all trace their instructor’s lineage to Czerny. One of Czerny’s most popular students was Franz Liszt, with whom he remained friends for the majority of his life. In 1852, the publication of Liszt’s *Études d’exécution transcendente* included a dedication to Czerny. A student of Beethoven and an instructor to Liszt, Czerny was in many ways central to carrying the spirit of Beethoven into the nineteenth century.

Czerny’s two primary publications written specifically for the beginning piano student were *Practical Method for Beginners on the Piano, Op. 599* and *The Young Pianist, Op. 823*. These two works are similar in many ways. Their first pieces both begin with two treble clefs, setting the pianist’s hands in C position, an octave apart, with the left hand rooted on middle C. They both start with step and skips, and then move progressively to 4ths and 5ths. They begin with long notes and then proceed to shorter notes, such as quarter notes and eighth notes (figures 4.2 and 4.3). The difficulty level of both methods increases at a gentle pace to accommodate the level of the student.

![Practical Method for Beginners on the Pianoforte](image)

*Figure 4.2: Opening piece from Op. 599*

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40 Ibid
However, the works differ in that *The Young Pianist* opens with a lengthy presentation of music fundamentals, such as note names, note values, key signatures, skips versus steps, accidentals, intervals, and articulation. A page from Czerny’s introduction to such terms can be seen in figure 4.4.
The Rudiments of Music

The signs used to show the position (pitch, either high or low) of the tones are called notes. They are written on what is called the staff, which consists of five parallel lines and the spaces between the lines.

The lowest line (or space) is called the first line (or space); the next line (or space) above, the second; etc.; that is, both lines and spaces are counted from below upwards.

Notes that are either too high or too low to be written on the staff must be set on or between short added lines above or below. These lines are called ledger lines.

For naming the notes, the first seven letters of the alphabet are used. In the key of C major the letters come in the following order: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, ending on C. These eight notes form what is called the scale of C major. Every scale is composed of five whole-steps and two half-steps, which occur in the following order:

Scale of C major

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{Whole-step} & \text{Whole-step} & \text{Half-step} & \text{Whole-step} & \text{Whole-step} & \text{Whole-step} & \text{Half-step} \\
C & D & E & F & G & A & B & C \\
\end{array}
\]

Tonic Supertonic Mediant Subdominant Dominant Superdominant Leading-tone Tonic

A sharp (♯) written before a note raises it a half-step; a flat (♭) written before a note lowers it a half-step. A natural (♮) restores a note to the original pitch.

There are two modes, the major and the minor mode. The principal scales in the minor mode are the melodic and the harmonic.

Melodic Minor Scale, ascending and descending

Harmonic Minor Scale, ascending and descending

One important difference between major and minor scales is that in the major there are four half-steps between tonic and mediant, but in the minor there are only three.

Figure 4.4: A page from the introduction to The Young Pianist
The Young Pianist is comprised of two books, containing 44 and 28 pieces respectively.
The pieces in book one contain elementary and late elementary works; the work then
progresses in its level of difficulty, with the majority of book two written at the intermediate level.
At the end of book one, there is also a section devoted to scales, where Czerny spells out all
major and minor keys in two octaves. The piece in figure 4.5 is a good example of a late
elementary piece found later in book one. The piece is an exercise in developing triad
accompaniments in the LH below clusters and parallel intervals in the RH, particularly the 6th.

![Figure 4.5: Piece number 28, emphasizing the use of the 6th](image)

As a pedagogue, Czerny was certainly meticulous. Figure 4.4 is only one of five pages
of his “rudiments of music.” He was also very particular about fingering. This can be seen in
the above-mentioned examples, as well as in his edited edition of Bach’s Well-Tempered
Clavier. This persistent desire to aid the student at every turn is one of the many traits that
made him one of the most notable keyboard pedagogues of his generation.
Recommended Editions:


Schumann, Robert

Robert Schumann (1810-1856) began his career as a virtuoso pianist with hopes of a concert career. However, a hand injury prevented him from realizing his dream of performing on stage. Instead, his wife Clara traveled and performed as a successful, talented pianist. After his injury, Schumann devoted his time to composing. He wrote prolifically for almost every genre, including symphonies, solo piano, lieder, and chamber music. He was also a music critic and cofounder of Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik (The New Journal for Music). Schumann would often focus his attention on a particular genre and then compose in great bursts. For example, in 1840, he composed 138 songs, a time which later became known as his Liederjahr (year of song). The following year, 1841, is considered his “year of the symphony.”

In 1848, Schumann composed a piece as a birthday gift for his eldest daughter Marie. The title read Stücke für’s Clavier / Zu Marie’chens 7tem Geburtstag / den 1sten September 1848 (Little Pieces for Piano / on Little Marie’s 7th Birthday / 1 September 1848). In a manner consistent with Schumann’s tendency to write in great spells, he wrote additional pieces in his Haushaltbuch (Household Book) for Marie. According to his sketches, he wrote more pieces from September 3rd to the 5th; and by September 9th, Schumann had declared that the album

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was “all but finished.” However, he continued to add more pieces, and Schumann submitted the project for publication on October 13, 1848.

Schumann was very particular about the appearance of the illustrations on the cover page. He enlisted the help of the artist Ludwig Richter in this endeavor, and many of the pieces in the album are personified on the cover. For example, the four seasons in the four corners of the page represent “Spring Song”, “Harvest Song”, “Vintage Song”, and “Winter I/II” (figure 4.6).  

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43 Ibid
Figure 4.6: Cover page from Album für die Jungend
While Schumann’s *Album für die Jungend* begins with elementary pieces (figure 4.7), its level of difficulty quickly accelerates (figure 4.8). This album is rather short, 43 pieces in all, and it seems Schumann wished to include both elementary and intermediate pieces in the work in order to appeal to students at all levels. The pieces that are appropriate for elementary students are the following:

1. No. 1: “Melodie”
2. No. 2: “Soldier’s March”
3. No. 3: “Humming Song”
4. No. 4: “A Hymn”
5. No. 5: “A Little Piece”
6. No. 7: “A Little Hunting Song”
7. No. 8: “The Wild Rider”
8. No. 9: “Little Folk-song”
9. No. 11: “Sicilian”
10. No. 14: “A Short Study”
11. No. 16: “First Sorrow”
12. No. 41: “Northern Song”

Although it is a short work, the opening piece “Melodie” (figure 4.7) is able to exemplify many of the features found within the Romantic style. One such aspect is the three-part texture found within the lines. The LH contains two parts, including an underlining counter melody against an oscillating G, giving the piece a harmonic framework. This type of texture is found in Schumann’s later works, as well as in Chopin, Mendelssohn, and many other Romantic
The beauty of this piece is its ability to encapsulate this texture in such a narrow range.

This volume is highly programmatic. As previously noted, Schumann insisted the album cover embody some of the pieces in the work. He also took great care in allowing the texture of each piece to reflect its title. The “Wilder Reiter” ("Wild Horseman", figure 4.8) is an example of such writing. The triple meter, lively staccatos, and occasional sforzandos mimic the energy and sound of a rider on his galloping horse. There are other works that Schumann wrote specifically with titles and textures for young people, including “Nachklänge aus dem Theater” (“Echoes from the Theater”) and “Erster Verlust” (“First Loss”). The particular piece that young people would most identify with from that era was “Knecht Ruprecht” (“Servant Rupert”), who was known as the servant and companion to Saint Nicholas (figure 4.9).

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44 Christos Tsitsaros, in discussion with the author, October 2017.
Schumann’s original title for the 43-piece album was *Weinachtsalbum für Kinder* (*Christmas Album for Children*). Schumann certainly meant for this album to have Christmas overtones and was adamant that the work be published by December. However, at the request of the artist Richter, he later changed the name to *Album für die Jugend*, thereby ensuring that the album would sell “forever and daily.”\(^{45}\) Schumann apparently enjoyed writing this album. He told his friends, “I don’t know that I’ve ever been in such a good mood as when writing these pieces. I felt as if learning to compose all over again, and here and there, you’ll also find traces of my old humor.”\(^ {46}\)

In a letter to Carl Reinecke dated October 1848, Schumann describes the way he felt about the album:

> I wrote the first pieces for the Album specifically for the birthday of our oldest child, and then more pieces came to me one after another; it was as if I were once again starting to compose from the very beginning. You will also detect something of my earlier humor [in them]. These pieces are completely different from the *Kinderszenen*. The latter are reminiscences

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\(^{45}\) Ibid

written by an adult for adults, whereas the "Christmas album" contains more anticipation, presentiment, [and] forward-looking perspectives for youthful players.  

**Recommended Editions:**

*Album for the Young, Op. 68, Alfred Masterwork Edition*

*Album für die Jugend, Op. 6, Henle Urtext Edition*

*Album for the Young, Op. 68, Schott Edition*

**Duvernoy, Jean-Baptiste**

Jean-Baptiste Duvernoy (1802-1880) was a French composer who studied and later taught at the Paris Conservatory. His compositions number over 300, most of which were written for keyboard or as chamber music. His works for keyboard were mostly instructional pieces, which include *Elementary Studies, Op. 176* and *The School of Mechanism, Op. 120*. He also wrote other piano works to improve finger dexterity.

His *Elementary Studies* contains a mixture of intermediate and elementary works, although most of them are written at the elementary level. An example, found in figure 4.10, demonstrates Duvernoy’s use of contrary motion, Alberti bass figures, and a simple alternating progression from the tonic to dominant chords. In this elementary piece, we also find both hands stretched beyond the typical five-finger hand position, giving the student opportunities to read music by steps, skips, or larger intervals.

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In figure 4.11, we find an intermediate study piece, which gives us a preview of what The School of Mechanism contains. This piece opens with a long sequence proceeding in a basic, yet commonly used, chord progression (I – V – vi – iii – IV – I – ii6 – V – I). The piece is also set up in two-bar phrases, encouraging the student to both play legato and to shape each phrase, as the crescendo and diminuendo markings indicate. The piece is also an excellent study in broken chord figuration.
Finally, *The School of Mechanism*, which contains 15 etudes in 3 volumes, is composed for the intermediate to late intermediate pianist. These pieces resemble some of Czerny’s exercises and reflect the importance placed on finger dexterity and technique in the opening of the nineteenth century. “Etude 12” (figure 4.12) challenges the technique of the pianist in a number of different ways. The challenge for the RH is its quick shifts on the keyboard, landing always on the third finger. The pianist is instructed to do this at a rapid pace. The opening of the LH supports the RH with staccato downbeats and sforzando triads on beat two.

![Etude 12 from The School of Mechanism](image)

**Figure 4.12:** Etude 12 from *The School of Mechanism*

Duvernoy’s contribution to elementary and intermediate literature is appreciated to this day. His elementary works introduce many important concepts, and his etudes are compared to those of Czerny. Most composers in this genre originated in Germanic speaking countries; therefore, a composer of this stature was well received in France.
Recommended Editions:


*School of Mechanism, Op. 120*, Willis Music Edition

**Bertini, Henri**

Henri Bertini (1798-1876) was a French composer, teacher, and performer. He studied music first with his father and then with his brother, a former student of Clementi. A child prodigy, Bertini and his father went on a tour of Belgium, Holland, and Germany at the age of 12, where he was received with great enthusiasm. He eventually settled in Paris in 1821.

While some scholars suggest that his life was “uneventful,” they all pay due respect to his output of pedagogical works, mostly in the form of etudes.

Among Bertini’s output is a comprehensive piano method for the beginner student, entitled *Méthode complète et progressive de piano*, or *A Complete and Progressive Method for the Pianoforte*. The opening pages include a lengthy glossary of musical terms, Robert Schumann’s sixty-eight “Rules for Young Musicians”, and in-depth illustrations of basic keyboard notation. The method is comprehensive, using the first 12 lessons (18 pages) to cover topics such as solfege, fingering, hand positions, ties, slurs, dotted notes, legato and staccato, and other concepts. With each lesson, Bertini presents a piece that the student can use to practice the new concept. An example of Bertini’s methodology is found in figures 4.13 and 3.14.

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The method advances at a steady pace, each piece building upon the concepts presented in earlier lessons. Once the student is past the fundamental lessons, Bertini systematically introduces key signatures. With each key signature, he first presents the scale followed by a piece in the new key, again with a new concept introduced. An example of this technique is seen in figure 4.15, a piece set in A major, which introduces the crescendo/diminuendo symbol. An A major scale preceded this piece.
Figure 4.15: Andante in A Major, introducing the crescendo and diminuendo

Bertini’s legacy as a composer of larger works was modest at best, but his method and etudes were widely used for more than a century.\textsuperscript{50} Other volumes worth looking at are his collections of etudes, including Op. 29 and Op. 32.

Recommended Editions:

*Complete and Progressive Method for the Pianoforte* is currently out of print. A copy of the score can be found online at the International Music Score Library Project (imslp.org)


Oesten, Theodore

Theodore Oesten (1813-1870) was a German composer born in Berlin who attained much success as a teacher and composer of short piano pieces. He was well-versed on a

\textsuperscript{50} ibid
number of instruments, including the clarinet and strings, and studied composition with Bohmer, Rungenhagen, and Schneider. His piano piece *Les Premières Violettes (The First Violets)* was well received and launched his career as a composer of piano pieces. Although Oesten published some of his pieces in collections or volumes, the majority of his pieces were published as standalone works, a departure from previous trends. He wrote most of his pieces at the intermediate level, which made them accessible to a larger audience. Although Oesten’s pieces “ruled the market”\(^5\) for many years, his name became largely forgotten and seldomly appears on today’s market. Still, they are composed with “sentimental taste” at the elementary and intermediate levels, making them ideal teaching pieces.\(^6\)

One of Oesten’s most popular pieces, *The Doll’s Dream and Awakening*, is slow and gentle at the beginning, signifying the doll’s state of rest. In the opening section, Oesten uses only the primary chords in C major (C, F, and G) and sets the RH in either C or F position, making this piece particularly attainable for a beginner at the piano. He also aids the student by writing very clear pedal and fingering notation (figure 4.16).

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\(^6\) Ibid
Figure 4.16: “The Doll’s Dream,” a study in pedaling, legato 3rds, and phrasing

The awakening of the doll (figure 4.17) is signified by a scherzando with a brisk tempo and bright staccatos. Oesten still uses basic chord positions in both hands, such as the C and G major chords outlined in the RH. This piece, with its varied sections, is ideal for students to learn over a long period of time, gradually adding sections as they become more familiar with the C major primary chords.
As mentioned previously, Oesten published most of his pieces as single works, rather than as part of a collection. These “singles” were character pieces, each of them portraying something one experienced in everyday life. In the example below (figure 4.18), Oesten portrays the music of the “Organ-Grinder” street musician.
The LH clearly imitates the *obbligato* produced from the instrument’s “grinder,” while the RH is the melody that the musician is able to manipulate with his keys. Again, Oesten does this while keeping both hands in traditional hand positions, making it an ideal piece for a late elementary or early intermediate student.

Despite Oesten’s popularity and success in the late nineteenth century, his works have largely been overlooked. Given the attractiveness of his character pieces and his attentiveness to the needs of the elementary student, piano instructors should give his works a second look.

**Recommended Editions:**

*Kinderträume, Op.65.* is currently out of print. A copy can be found online at the International Music Score Library Project (imslp.org)

*The Doll’s Dream and Awakening,* Abundant Silence Publishing
Heller, Stephen

Stephen Heller (1813-1888) was a Hungarian-born composer and teacher. A child prodigy, Heller’s debut performance was of Dussek’s concerto for two pianos at the age of nine, which he played with his instructor, M. Franz Brauer. Following this success, he was sent to Vienna to study with the famous instructor Carl Czerny. By the age of 12, he gave concerts in Vienna and Pesth (Budapest). When he was 15, his father arranged a concert tour through Hungary, Poland, and Northern Germany. Hippolyte Barbedette, the original biographer of Heller, describes the reception given to child prodigies at the time:

There was at that time a rage for infant prodigies, who swarmed all over the country. The boy had a brilliant touch, and the confidence of untried youth. Moreover, he had the rarer gift – that of improvisation. It was announced in the programs that at the end of the concerts, Stephen Heller would extemporize on themes suggested by the audience. These flights of fancy – freie phantasie, as they were called – captivated the public. 53

After his tour, Heller resided in Augsburg for eight years, where he corresponded with Robert Schumann. Schumann was so impressed by Heller’s compositions that he invited him to be the Augsburg correspondent for Die Neu Zeitschrift für Musik. At the age of 25, Heller moved to Paris, where he became closely acquainted with Chopin, Liszt, and Berlioz. He resided in Paris, where he worked as a teacher, composer, and performer until his death in 1888.

While Heller was a prolific composer, he is only known to have written works for the piano. These works include 4 sonatas, 44 preludes, and more than 150 etudes. Heller’s Op. 16, L’art de phraser (The Art of Phrasing), was one of his most significant works. Published in 1840, Heller set out to write one piece in nearly every form for the piano, including the impromptu, intermezzo, lied, nocturne, rondeau, allemande, fantasy, and scherzo. The opus contains 24 pieces in all keys. Heller indicates the importance of phrasing within each piece by

his articulate use of slurs in both the treble and bass clefs. As the title suggests, the opus is essentially a collection of etudes that focuses on phrasing.

The success of Op. 16 brought Heller’s name as a composer to a place of prominence in Paris. Heller was soon in demand as a composer of study pieces; and in the following years, he wrote Ops. 45, 46, and 47 (80 etudes in all), all designed to precede Op. 16. The etudes Op. 25 and Op. 47 are probably the best-suited collections for the elementary pianist.

In all of Heller’s etudes, phrasing is heavily emphasized. An example can be seen in his etude Op. 47, Number 2 (figure 4.19).

Heller opens the piece with very clear four-bar phrases and indicates a legato RH. Alongside the RH, he also creates a LH stepwise line by sustaining the first note of the LH in each measure. Thus, Heller creates a moving phrase in both hands. The piece is certainly attainable for an elementary student. It contains no wide leaps, moves slowly through various hand positions, and features an attractive melody.

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Heller’s etudes range in difficulty from late elementary to advanced and are widely played and recorded by pianists today. These pieces are extremely valuable, as they stress phrasing while exposing students to a wide variety of forms.

**Recommended Editions:**


**Burgmüller, Johann Friedrich Franz**

Johann Friedrich Franz Burgmüller (1806-1874) was born into a family of musicians in Regensburg, Germany. His father was a musical theatre director in Weimar. Burgmüller gave his first public concert at the age of 24 in Kassel under the direction of Ludwig Spohr. He then moved to Paris, where he resided until his death. Burgmüller’s compositions include piano music at a variety of different levels, but he is best remembered today for the etudes he wrote for children.55

Most of Burgmüller’s output for piano can be found in three sets of etudes:

- Op. 100, *25 Études faciles et progressives (Progressive Pieces)*
- Op. 105, *12 Études brillantes et mélodiques (Brillant and Melodious Studies)*
- Op. 109, *18 Faisant suite aux Études faciles (Characteristic Etudes)*

Of these three collections, only Op. 100 contains a repertoire that can be considered late elementary or intermediate level, so it is this collection that will be explored further.

25 Progressive Pieces contains several popular teaching pieces that appear in compilation volumes, including “Arabesque” no. 2, “Ballade” no.15, and “Angel's Voices” no. 21. It should be noted that Burgmüller’s etudes are highly programmatic and feature subtitles, such as “Children’s Party”, “The Limpid Stream”, “The Chase”, and “Tender Flower”. These pieces also function as etudes, emphasizing a particular concept, such as scale work, triplets, finger legato, and staccatos. Burgmüller’s Op. 100 is thus a collection of artistic etudes that can stand alone as appealing repertoire or as recital pieces.

Burgmüller employs certain techniques in Op. 100 that make these pieces well-suited for an elementary pianist. For example, in “Arabesque”, he sets the hands in a five-finger position. The RH is set in A minor for measures 3 and 4, followed by a shift to D minor and then to A minor again in measures 5 and 6 (figure 4.20). If a student is familiar with the A and D minor hand positions, learning this piece will prove to be easier because it allows the pupil to focus on the staccato versus legato texture, terraced dynamics, hand position changes, and other techniques that appear in this etude.

![Arabesque](image)

Figure 4.20: A section from Arabesque, Op. 100 No. 2
The use of familiar chord inversions, repetitive chord accompaniments, and small intervals make these pieces suitable for a student pianist. In the B section (figure 4.21), the figuration switches to the LH, this time with the RH playing a lyrical legato line.

![Figure 4.21: B section from Arabesque, Op. 100 No. 2](image)

The piece “L’Harmonie des Anges” ("Harmony of the Angels"), No. 21, is a work that can be used to teach the art of phrasing and voice leading. The piece contains arpeggios and inversions, which can aid the student in creating fluid lines that rise and fall not only in terms of range, but also in terms of dynamics as the student creates legato swells in each measure (figure 4.22). This work is a fine example of Burgmüller’s ability to write a programmatic piece within the framework of an etude.
Figure 4.22: “Harmony of the Angels,” Op. 100 No. 21

Recommended Editions:


Gurlitt, Cornelius

Cornelius Gurlitt (1820-1901) was born in Altona in Schleswig-Holstein and originally studied music with the father of the well-known pianist Carl Reinecke. He traveled extensively as an adult, visiting Copenhagen, Hørsholm, Leipzig, and Rome. He was recognized as a gifted pianist, organist, music director, and teacher.

Gurlitt composed a great deal of material, including symphonies, operas, cantatas, and teaching pieces. His instructional keyboard pieces are still popular to this day, and his collections include:
First Lessons, Op. 117
Album Leaves for the Young, Op. 101
Little Flowers, Op. 205
Album for the Young, Op. 140
6 Piano Sonatinas, Op. 54
Buds and Blossoms, Op. 107

First Lessons, Op. 117 begins with the most basic pieces, just as the title suggests, and starts in C position (figure 4.23).

**Figure 4.23**: Opening piece from *First Lessons*

Throughout the first half of *First Lessons* (34 pieces), Gurlitt focuses on basic fundamentals, such as maintaining consistent fingering, keeping the hands within five-finger patterns, and the introduction of basic dynamics. The collection is progressive, and Gurlitt methodically introduces changing hand positions, wider intervals, and varied key and time signatures. In addition, the nature of the pieces changes from elementary study pieces to late elementary character pieces. “Morning Salute” (figure 4.24) is an example of a late elementary character piece.
Another widely available collection is *Op. 140, Album for the Young*. *Album for the Young* picks up where *First Lessons* left off by introducing progressively complex studies. The collection also includes many character pieces with titles that describe the thoughts, habits, or encounters a child might experience. Some example titles include “The Little Wanderer”, “Catch Me!”, and “The Murmuring Brook” (figure 4.25).

![Figure 4.24: “Morning Salute”](image)

![Figure 4.25: “The Murmuring Brook”](image)
“The Murmuring Brook” is a piece with repeating sixteenth notes, mimicking the rippling brook a child might discover while playing in the woods or a meadow. This piece allows the student to focus on creating two voices in one hand and differentiating the importance between the two, which is a familiar texture of the time. Other elements to be studied are legato lines, dynamics, voicing, and other fundamentals that were introduced in Gurlitt’s *First Lessons*.

**Recommended Editions:**

*Album for the Young, Op. 140, Alfred Masterwork Edition*

*Gurlitt: Selected Work for Piano, Kjos Edition*

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**Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Ilyich**

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) was born in Russia and enjoyed international fame as both a composer and conductor. During a tour of the United States in 1891, Cambridge University awarded him an honorary doctorate, and he was invited to be the guest conductor for Carnegie Hall’s opening night on May 5, 1891.\(^{56}\) Although he is best known for his symphonic works, he also wrote pieces for the piano, which were often organized into smaller groups. *Album for the Young, Op. 39* is one such collection, containing 24 elementary and intermediate works written for children. Following in the footsteps of Schumann, the original title for the work was *Children’s Album: Collection of Easy Pieces for Children in the Manner of Schumann*.

In February 1878, Tchaikovsky wrote to his editor about his interest in writing an album for children. In May of the same year, he wrote 24 pieces in the span of only four days.\(^{57}\) Some of these pieces pay tribute to Schumann in a number of ways. “The Little Horseman”, for

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example, with its staccato articulation, presto tempo, and triple meter, mimics Schumann’s “Der Wilder Reiter” (“The Wild Horseman”) (figure 4.26).

The little horseman

![Music notation](image)

Figure 4.26: “The little horseman”

There are other striking similarities between Schumann and Tchaikovsky’s works. Both Schumann’s and Tchaikovsky’s albums contain a choral work towards the beginning (“Morning Prayer” and “Chorale”, respectively), a soldier’s march in a 2/4 time signature, as well as pieces depicting the music of various nationalities near the end. For Schumann, these include “The Italian Sailor’s Song” and “Nordic Song”. Tchaikovsky went further, writing “Russian Song”, “Italian Song”, “Old French Song”, “German Song”, and “Neapolitan Song”.

In figures 4.27 and 4.28 we can see striking similarities between Schumann’s “Soldier’s March” and Tchaikovsky’s “March of the Wooden Soldiers.”
March of the wooden soldiers

However, there are also traits that make Tchaikovsky’s album uniquely different from Schumann’s. For example, the level of Tchaikovsky’s pieces is consistently appropriate for a late elementary or early intermediate student. In contrast, Schumann’s album starts at the elementary level and progresses very quickly to a late intermediate or early advanced level. Tchaikovsky also exposes children to various musical genres, such as the waltz, mazurka, chorale, polka, and funeral march. The funeral march (figure 4.29) is entitled “The Doll’s Burial,” and it immediately follows “The Sick Doll.”
Historically, Tchaikovsky's homage to Schumann in his *Album for the Young* depicts how widespread and popular Schumann's album had become only 30 years after its publication. Tchaikovsky's pieces have unique pedagogical value, as they expose students to musical genres and styles of various nationalities.

**Recommended Editions:**

*Album for the Young*, Edited by Alexandre Dossin, Schirmer Performance Edition

*Album for the Young: Twenty-Four Pieces*, Kalmus Edition

**Gretchaninoff, Alexander Tikhonovich**

Born in Kaluga, Russia, Alexander Tikhonovich Gretchaninoff (1864-1965) began his musical studies at the relatively late age of fourteen. His father opposed the idea of him
studying music, and when Gretchaninoff finally did begin his formal training, he did so without telling his father. In the late 1880s, he began his studies with Rimsky-Korsakov, and the two formed a bond that lasted until Korsakov’s death in 1908. Although he was mostly a composer of symphonies, operas, chamber music, and liturgical music, he did write numerous keyboard pieces at the elementary level, which remain highly valued among pedagogues today. Below is a list of collections he wrote specifically for children:


Op. 119, *Grandfather’s Album* – 17 pieces


The most widely used collection today is Gretchaninoff’s Op. 98, *Livre d’enfants (Album for Children)*. This collection includes several programmatic titles, such as “The Tin Soldiers”, “Farewell”, “The Cradle Song”, and “A Little Dance”. “Farewell” (figure 4.30), with its slow tempo and minor key, depicts the sense of sadness one might feel when facing the departure of a loved one. This piece is suitable for children, as it is written with a thin texture, no wide leaps, and in a slow tempo. However, this piece is also instructional, as it introduces hand position changes and instances of chromatic movement.

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In “The Tin Soldiers in Camp” (figure 4.31), we find a piece that mimics a child at play with his toys, tin soldiers in this case. The piece opens with a bugle call, a simple major triad comprised of the only notes available on a bugle. After this call, a march tempo is set, which resembles one that a child might use when marching and playing with their soldiers.
Another valuable collection is На зеленом лугу (On the Green Meadow). In this work, we find 10 pieces with titles that evoke meadow scenes, such as “Mother’s Song”, “Walking”, “Spring Morning”, and “In the Country”. The collection entitled Pensées Fugitives (Fleeting Thoughts) includes such titles as “A Reproach”, “Expectation”, and “Reminiscences”.

In his own time, Gretchaninoff was known mostly for his large orchestral works. When he did write for piano, it was mostly at the elementary level, and it is these pieces that he is best remembered for today.

**Recommended Editions:**

*Children’s Book, Op. 98, Schott Music*

*Historiettes, Op. 118 - Piano, Alphonse Leduc Publishing*
Chapter 5: The Contemporary Era

In the twentieth century, the course of music practice and composition diverged into various schools of thought. From the impressionism of Debussy and Ravel and the rise of jazz and ragtime in the American south to the breakdown of tonality seen in the works of Schoenberg, the Contemporary era refers to a wide variety of styles, venues, and performance practices.

Many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century composers, such as Rachmaninoff, Edward McDowell, and Amy Beach, are now referred to as the late Romantics, since they retained many elements of nineteenth-century traditions. It was also during this time that French composers, such as Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel, composed impressionist music, employing such elements as parallel chords, modes, and pentatonic scales to create new sonorities at the piano. Perhaps one of the most crucial developments of the twentieth century was the gradual eclipse of tonality, culminating with Schoenberg’s 12-tone system. Based on a grid, or series of rows, this approach employed the use of all 12 tones of the scale in such a way, where each note could only appear once within the row. The adopters of this practice, most notably Alban Berg and Anton Webern, along with Schoenberg, became known as the Second Viennese School (the first being Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert).

The rise of jazz in New Orleans and its subsequent spread to Chicago and New York combined African American culture with European elements to create a truly American-born genre. Components of jazz music include extended chords (such as 9ths, 11ths, and 13ths), syncopation and polyrhythms, and a strong emphasis on improvisation. These elements often influenced and overlapped with ragtime, bebop, blues, big band, and boogie-woogie. Jazz and blues later influenced the works of other major composers, such as George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, and Samuel Barber.
Some forms found in this era are reminiscent of earlier periods, while others stretch the boundaries of what can be considered a musical form. Sergei Prokofiev, a Neoclassicist, wrote nine piano sonatas, the greatest collection of sonatas by a major composer of this era. Character pieces were well preserved throughout almost every genre. Other avant-garde techniques included playing on or inside a prepared piano (using such objects as mutes, plastic, or nuts and bolts). Chance music was also popular, where the ultimate performance is decided by the audience, such as the inactivity of John Cage's 4’33” or music notation, where the artist reads graphs or other representations of music rather than standard notation. These practices, referred to as aleatory, chance, or indeterminate music, ensure that a piece is never heard the same way twice.

The wide variety of styles that existed during this era made it challenging to decide which pieces to include in this project. In the end, the following parameters were used to guide my decision. First, without straying too far into distant avant-garde techniques, my desire is to expose students to as many styles and practices as possible. Next, my focus is to discuss composers who devoted much of their works to elementary and intermediate repertoire, such as Kabalevsky and Bela Bartók. Finally, my goal is to examine the level of difficulty of the music itself, as the scope of this project does not cover styles or techniques beyond the level of a late elementary student.

When assessing the difficulty of a piece from the contemporary period, an instructor must be familiar with the various styles found within the era. Pieces by straightforward or
Neoclassicist composers, such as Bela Bartók, may be easy to examine as many of the earlier principles from the Classical or Romantic era still apply. However, when assessing jazz music for instance, one must consider the width of the chord in relation to the student’s hand along with the complexity of the rhythm. Limiting the width of chords may not entirely rule out the use of extended chords, but they will need to appear in various inversions with certain notes omitted if they are intended for younger students. The use of chance music is still a viable possibility for an elementary student. When assigning such music though, the complexity of the prepared piano and the symbols on the printed page must not be too complex. Often, music that includes clusters, glissandos, or other effects also includes an extensive preface explaining the various symbols and how they ought to be executed. The explanation of such symbols must be relatively straightforward for an elementary student, as the idea of playing from symbols will most likely be a new experience.

Given that so many styles and concepts are introduced in contemporary literature, it is essential that students have a strong background in the preceding periods of music. It is also essential that they keep up with their execution of scales, chord progressions, arpeggios, and other technical aspects in order to set the foundation for works found in this era.

Rebikov, Vladimir

Born into a family of musicians, Vladimir Rebikov (1866-1920) first studied music with his mother. Eventually, his music reflected the influence of Tchaikovsky, and some scholars credit
Rebikov as being the father of Russian Modernism. His compositions often use unorthodox intervals, such as 4ths, 9ths, and 11ths. Rebikov’s contribution to children’s music is particularly noteworthy. He even wrote operas for children, including The Christmas Tree (Moscow, 1900) and Snow White (1906), which received critical acclaim. A number of his piano works were also written specifically for children, including these important collections:

- Op. 37, Tableux pour enfants (Pictures for Children) – 7 pieces
- Op. 31, Silhouettes (Pictures for the Piano) – 9 pieces
- Trois ballades pour piano (Three Ballads for the Piano) – 3 pieces
- Les étrennes de Noël (The Christmas Gift) – 14 pieces

Op. 31 is the most recognized and widely published of these collections. Below is an example from this volume (figure 5.1).

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Notice that Rebikov’s pedaling notation is quite specific. These pedal marks show how Rebikov uses the pedal “to produce sometimes nebulous and often dissonant impressionistic effects, by deliberately blurring melody notes and overlapping the sounds of accompanying chords.” The image of a skater is invoked by the 6/8 meter, with the last half of each measure leading up to the high point of beat one. In this elementary piece, we find the presence of 6ths and 7ths, which challenge the range of the student’s hand. As with Ravel and Debussy, one of

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the modernistic features of Rebikov’s music is his prevalent use of extended chords, such as 7ths and 9ths.

**Recommended Editions:**


**Bartók, Béla**

Béla Viktor János Bartók (1881-1945) was born in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary (now Sânnicolau Mareis, Romania) and began his piano studies with his mother. Bartók eventually studied at the Royal Academy of Music from 1899 to 1903 and became a teacher there in 1907. Alongside Liszt, Bartók is considered one of Hungary’s most important and influential composers. 62

Bartók had a fondness for folk tunes and would often travel great distances, even as far as North Africa, to uncover such songs. His hunger for these melodies led him to discover thousands of folk tunes over the course of 40 years. 63 David Taylor Nelson of Cedarville University said, “His work revealed to the world that folk music exists, is important, and that its study stands as an independent academic discipline.” 64 Bartók is now considered the principal founder of ethnomusicology.

Bartók wrote an astounding number of piano pieces (around 400), more than any other known composer of the twentieth century. However, the significance of these works lies in the number that were devoted to children. For elementary pianists, Bartók wrote:

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Sz. 39 – *Ten Easy Pieces* (1908)


Sz. 42 – *For Children* – 79 pieces published in two volumes

Sz. 53 – *First Term at the Piano* – 23 pieces

Sz. 82 – *9 Little Pieces*

Of the 273 keyboard pieces listed above, the majority were written for children. Although Bartók wrote many other piano works, including virtuosic pieces, these numbers portray a passion for writing for and teaching music to children that is far more significant than most other composers. Immanuela Gruenberg states:

> From Bach through Beethoven, Schumann, and others, many of the great composers wrote teaching pieces intended for students with various levels of proficiency. But the sheer number of Bartók’s pedagogical compositions puts him in a class of his own.\(^65\)

Bartók’s most significant contribution to children’s music was his *Mikrokosmos* series with the subtitle *153 Progressive Pieces in 6 Volumes*. He began writing the series in 1926 for his son Peter while teaching piano at the Budapest Academy of Music, and he completed the work between 1932 and 1939. His son Peter said:

> His teaching programme did not follow an accepted ‘piano school’ technique…In the course of our lessons he sometimes asked me to wait while he sat down at his desk and I would hear only [the] scratching of his pen. In a short while, he would bring to the piano an exercise, or a short piece.\(^66\)

*Mikrokosmos* is set out like a method – the pieces begin simply but gradually increase in difficulty through the course of the series. The first volume opens with simple unison melodies set in a five-finger position, such as pieces numbered 3 and 4 (figure 5.2). Bartók also

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introduces various modes from the very beginning of the volume, such as dorian and locrian, also demonstrated in pieces 3 and 4 (figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Pieces number 3 and 4 from Mikrokosmos
In piece number 17, Bartók introduces contrary motion with the hands moving away or towards each other. He includes the use of modes, but in this case uses the mixed modes ionian and lydian (figure 5.3).

Another important piece in the volume is number 22, in which he introduces counterpoint. This is followed by a piece that uses inversions in its imitation. Notice again the use of modes in both pieces (figure 5.4).
Figure 5.4: Pieces number 22 and 23, the use of counterpoint
Many of Bartók’s pieces are written with the intention of introducing a particular concept, such as dynamics, accents, modes, triplets, and articulation. Many of these pieces have titles that reflect such concepts, such as “Major and Minor”, “Thumbs Under”, or “In Lydian Mode”. Other pieces are simply programmatic, such as “Country Fair”, “Buzzing”, and “Wandering”. In volume three, there are homages to J.S. Bach and Robert Schumann (Nos. 79 and 80).

Figure 5.5 is an example from volume three (No. 107) with the title “Melody in the Mist.” This piece introduces the student to the use of clusters.

![Melody in the Mist](image)

**Figure 5.5:** “Melody in the Mist,” the use of clusters

From 1908 to 1909 while teaching at the Budapest Academy, Bartók wrote *For Children*, a collection of 85 pieces. The first volume of 42 pieces was based on Hungarian folk songs, while the second volume of 43 pieces was based on Slovakian folk tunes. The folk tunes appear harmonized in Bartók’s typical modal style. Bartók later removed six pieces from the volumes.
because he discovered that they were not original folk tunes, and the collection now consists of 79 pieces.\textsuperscript{67}

Below is a piece from the beginning of the first volume – a simple Hungarian folk tune put to harmony (figure 5.6).

![3. Former Friends](image)

\textbf{Figure 5.6: “Former Friends”}

Figure 5.7 is an example of a Slovakian folk tune from the end of the second volume. The melody is a folk tune, set above Bartók’s original harmonies.

![37. The Lovely Girls of Budapest](image)

\textbf{Figure 5.7: “The Lovely Girls of Budapest”}

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid, Grove Music Online
The above-mentioned collections represent a synthesis of Bartók’s passion for both ethnomusicology and piano pedagogy. The pieces are innovative, instructive, playful, and educational on both a musical and cultural level. Bartók’s pieces for children are still popular and can be found in many of today’s methods and compilations.

**Recommended Editions:**

* Mikrokosmos, Volumes 1-6, Boosey and Hawkes Edition
* For Children, Volumes 1 and 2, Boosey and Hawkes Edition
* Bartók: Album for the Young (includes Ten Easy Pieces and First Term at the Piano), Schirmer Edition

**Prokofiev, Sergei**

Sergei Sergeyevich Prokofiev (1891-1953) produced works that covered nearly every genre, including seven operas, seven symphonies, eight ballets, five piano concertos, two violin concertos, a cello concerto, the Symphony-Concerto for cello and orchestra, and nine completed piano sonatas. Some of his well-known compositions include his second and third piano sonatas, Peter and the Wolf, and the ballet Romeo and Juliet. One of his most ambitious artistic projects was setting Tolstoy’s War and Peace as an opera.

In the tradition of earlier composers, Prokofiev took the time to write a single collection of pieces for children entitled Music for Children, Op. 65. This collection is the only known set of pieces Prokofiev wrote at the elementary to intermediate level. The opus was written in 1935 while Prokofiev was in Paris, and the titles of the movements appear in both Russian and French. The work employs programmatic titles, opening with a piece entitled “Matin”

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(“Morning”) and closing with “Soir” (“Evening”) and “Sur les prés la lune se promene” (“The Moon Wanders on the Meadows”). The suite thus opens and closes with a sense of daybreak and closure (figure 5.8).

\[ \text{1} \]
\[ \text{Утро \ Matin} \]

Figure 5.8: “Matin”

In between these short pieces, we find dance movements such as “Tarantella”, “Valse”, “Cortège de Sauterelles” (“March of the Crickets”), and “Marche”. These movements reflect the various aspects of a child’s life. The beautiful “La pluie et l’arc-en-ciel” (“The Rain and the Rainbow”), number eight, uses black note clusters, wide intervals, and an andante tempo to invoke peace that comes after the rain (figure 5.9).
Prokofiev’s *Music for Children* contains a wide variety of techniques, articulations, and tempos as well as various moods, such as sadness, joy, melancholy, seriousness, and playfulness. Although most of the pieces are at the intermediate level, Prokofiev did write them for children, and there are several which are appropriate for the beginning student. The collection is often overlooked but would be a valuable addition to any piano teacher’s repertoire.

**Recommended Editions:**


**Bloch, Ernest**

Born in Geneva, Ernest Bloch (1880-1959) began his musical studies on the violin at the age of nine. He became a prolific composer and later furthered the education of many musicians as a school administrator. In line with his Jewish heritage, Bloch employed biblical themes in many of his compositions, which won numerous awards and prizes.\(^69\) In 1916, he immigrated to the United States and took on a number of administrative positions. He served as

the first composition teacher at the Mannes School of Music (1917-1920), the first musical
director at the Cleveland Institute of Music (1920-1925), and the director of the San Francisco
Conservatory (1925-1930).\footnote{David Z. Kushner, “Bloch, Ernest,” Grove Music Online,
http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/03287 (accessed February,
2017).}

Bloch’s contribution to children’s piano music was modest yet groundbreaking in its
presentation and circulation. In 1924, Carl Fischer Publishing licensed his collection *Enfantines:*
*Ten Pieces for Children* and distributed it throughout the United States and beyond. His work
was also some of the first to include illustrations. By adding a simple image to each piece, Bloch
aided the student in interpreting the music in a meaningful way. “Teasing” (figure 5.10)
illustrates this technique by depicting the lighthearted banter that can happen between siblings
or friends.

![Figure 5.10: “Teasing”](image)

Piece No. 6, “Melody” (figure 5.11), portrays a young girl alone at the piano. Bloch marks
the RH accompaniment at *pp* and the LH melody at *mp*, instructing the student to bring out the
LH melody over the accompaniment. This is no simple task for an elementary player, making this an ideal piece to use to introduce the technique of voicing. After nine bars, the LH becomes the accompaniment and the RH takes over the melody.

6. Melody

![Image of 6. Melody]

**Figure 5.11:** “Melody”

Bloch’s daughter, Lucienne Bloch, designed the tasteful illustrations found within *Enfantines.*

**Recommended Edition:**

*Enfantines: Ten Pieces for Children*, Carl Fischer Edition

**Hindemith, Paul**

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) was a German composer and conductor born in Hanau. He studied at the Hoch’sche Konservatorium in Frankfurt and became known for his extraordinary

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abilities on the violin and viola d’amore early in life. He played in several string quartets, including the Rebner and Amar quartets, the latter of which he founded. The Amar Quartet was quite successful and toured throughout Europe. As Hindemith’s reputation grew, he began to champion the works of avant-garde composers, such as Anton Webern and Arnold Schoenberg.\footnote{Geoffrey Skelton, Paul Hindemith: The Man Behind the Music: A Biography, (London: V Gollancz, 1975).}

In 1940, Hindemith immigrated to the United States, where he taught primarily at Yale University. He also wrote a book entitled \textit{A Composer’s World}, based on a series of lectures he gave at Harvard University. Although he became an American citizen in 1946, he moved back to Zurich in 1953 and taught at the University of Zurich. He composed and conducted up until his death in 1963.\footnote{Giselher Schubert, “Hindemith, Paul,” Grove Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13053 (accessed October 19, 2016).}

Hindemith was known primarily as a composer of opera, orchestral, and chamber music; however, he also wrote a number of works for the piano. Among those works is a collection of 12 piano pieces entitled \textit{Kleine Klaviermusik: Leichte Fünftonstücke für Klavier}, or \textit{Small Piano Pieces: Easy Five Tone Pieces for Piano}, Op. 45/4.

At first glance, the pieces in this volume do not appear to be easy, given the level of chromaticism. However, Hindemith notes in the title that these pieces are “Fünftonstücke”, or “Five Tone Pieces”. A close examination of these pieces reveals that each hand position is situated within a five-finger range and rarely stretches beyond a fifth (figure 5.12).
Kleine Klaviermusik
Leichte Fünftonstücke

Mäßig schnell

In line with Hindemith’s title, these pieces are short, none of them exceeding one page. Although the pieces in this collection do vary in difficulty, the combination of the five-finger hand positions and the short duration qualify them as elementary level.

Through the 12 pieces in this collection, Hindemith presents a wide range of pianistic concepts, such as varying tempos, articulations, rhythms, dynamics, and syncopation. Most of the pieces are in traditional time signatures, but Hindemith does present one in 5/4 meter (figure 5.13).

Langsam, ruhig schreitend

Figure 5.13: Piece No. 9

Figure 5.12: Opening piece from Kleine Klaviermusik: Leichte Fünftonstücke
Hindemith wrote one more collection of elementary pieces specifically for children. In 1930, he wrote an opera for children entitled Wir Bauen Eine Stadt (We are Building a City). Shortly thereafter, he arranged the themes of this opera into a suite of six pieces with the title Wir bauen eine Stadt: Klavierstücke für Kinder von Paul Hindemith, or We are Building a City: Piano Pieces for Children by Paul Hindemith. These pieces are more straightforward than Hindemith’s original Klavierstücke because they are simple transcriptions of opera themes. They also follow the progression of titles in the opera, with such as “Marsch” (No. 1), “Lied: Wir bauen eine neue Stadt” (No. 2) (figure 5.14), and “Lied: Ich bin ein Schaffner” (No. 3).

Figure 5.14: Theme from the opera Wir bauen eine Stadt

Although Hindemith spent most of his career conducting and composing large-scale and chamber works, he followed in the footsteps of Schumann and Tchaikovsky by devoting a certain amount of his time and energy to writing for children in his characteristic style, and these pieces are important for students today.

Recommended Editions:

Editions of both Kleine Klavier Musik (Op. 45/4) and Wir bauen eine Stadt are out of print. Both works can be found at the International Music Score Library Project (imslp.org)
Tansman, Alexandre

Alexandre Tansman (1897-1986) wrote over 850 works, primarily piano pieces and chamber music. Tansman also had an affinity for writing piano music for children, such as:

Pour les Enfants (For Children), Books 1, 2, and 3
Je joue pour Papa (I Play for Papa)
Je Joue Pour Maman (I Play for Mama)
Les Jeunes au Piano (Youth at the Piano)
Ten Diversions for the Young Pianist
Piano in Progress
Zehn Kinderstücke (Ten Children’s Pieces)
Happy Time, Books 1, 2, and 3

Born in the Polish city of Łódź, Tansman studied music at the Łódź conservatory from 1908 to 1914 and then earned a doctorate in law at the University of Warsaw in 1918. Shortly after, he moved to Paris, where he became acquainted with Stravinsky and Ravel. Although Tansman lived most of his life in Paris, he always considered himself a Pole, and much of his music contained Jewish and Polish themes. In 1941, Tansman fled the persecution of Jewish people in Europe and moved to Los Angeles. While there, he wrote scores for six movies and received an Oscar nomination in 1946 for the film Paris Underground. He returned to Paris in 1946.

A gifted pianist and prolific composer, Tansman was an international success. He toured America with the pianist Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1927, and he was a welcomed guest of Mahatma Gandhi in 1933.74 While in the United States, he met

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leading jazz musicians such as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Art Tatum. He also became a close friend of George Gershwin.\textsuperscript{75}

Tansman wrote the \textit{Happy Time} volumes for his daughters, Mireille and Marianne.\textsuperscript{76} The \textit{Happy Time} series contains Tansman’s most recognized elementary piano works and is still widely used to this day. The series includes three books:

\textit{Book 1 – Primary}

\textit{Book 2 – Elementary}

\textit{Book 3 – Intermediate}

Even though Tansman titled the first book \textit{Primary}, he obviously expected some musical knowledge since he wrote the score on the grand staff (figure 5.15).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=.8\textwidth]{figure5_15}
\caption{“Both Ways,” from \textit{Happy Time Book 1}}
\end{figure}

\footnotesize
\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{75} Tansman, Alexandre, preface to \textit{Je Joue pour papa}. (Paris: Durand, 2006), 3.
\end{flushright}
This opening piece, entitled “Both Ways”, finds the RH rooted in the five-finger position of A minor. The LH, however, demands an exercise in crossing the thumb under the second finger as the line descends chromatically. Although the LH is a set of descending half steps, Tansman alludes to harmonies that are related to the key of A minor, such as E major, D major and minor, and a d# diminished chord in bar seven. A beginner will still find the piece approachable, even with the thumb shifting in the LH. The student will also enjoy discovering the simple harmonic movement invoked by the LH chromatic line.

In the second volume of *Happy Time*, it is apparent that Tansman’s interpretation of the word “elementary” differs from what it means today. These pieces require more advanced technique, with one being a four-voice fugue (figure 5.17). Putting that aside, students will find many of the pieces in this volume to be quite attractive and programmatic, such as “Dancing Air,” “Perpetual Motion,” “Lament,” and “Swedish Dance”. Below is an excerpt from “Perpetual Motion” (figure 5.16).

![Perpetual Motion](image)

**Figure 5.16:** “Perpetual Motion,” from *Happy Time Book 2*

In this piece, the C-D-C repeating pattern in the RH is the perpetual motion referred to in the title. As the piece progresses, the RH reaches toward higher intervals (fifths and octaves) on each downbeat, while the following three sixteenth notes continue with the C-D-C pattern. The piece is certainly “perpetual”, as Tansman does not waiver from the RH sixteenth note
pattern. This piece embodies a technical exercise, yet is attainable for the late elementary or early intermediate pianist. The tasteful LH accompanying notes provide a melodic line, giving the student contrasting material between the hands.

As mentioned previously, Tansman includes a four-voice fugue in Book 2 – Elementary. The piece’s tempo marking, *lento cantabile*, gives the student time to work out the complex counterpoint. Tansman also includes precise fingering suggestions, dictating which hand positions might work best for the complexity of the fugue. While the piece is certainly not elementary, it would work as a nice introductory fugue for an intermediate student (figure 5.17).
**Figure 5.17:** A fugue from *Happy Time Book 3*

**Recommended Editions:**

-Happy Time Series, Hal Leonard Publishing

-10 Diversions, Hal Leonard Publishing

-Je joue pour Papa (I Play for Papa), Hal Leonard Publishing

-Je Joue Pour Maman (I Play for Mama), Hal Leonard Publishing
Kabalevsky, Dmitry

Dmitry Borisovich Kabalevsky (1904-1987) was a prominent Russian composer who helped found the Union of Soviet Composers in Moscow, an organization committed to supporting young composers and the advancement of musical culture throughout the region. Although his father pressured him to pursue mathematics, Kabalevsky was drawn to the arts at a very early age, and he also delved into poetry and painting. He is often compared to Prokofiev and Shostakovich, although his works are not as chromatically adventurous as theirs are. His pieces embraced the ideas of socialist realism and have been characterized by some as “popular, bland, and successful.” From the beginning, Kabalevsky had a passion for writing for student pianists. Both his Violin Concerto and his First Cello Concerto are now known as “youth works”. Kabalevsky also wrote a book entitled *Music and Education: a Composer Writes about Musical Education*.

Kabalevsky worked to improve the state of music education throughout his life. He helped set up music programs in Soviet schools and wrote a great number of elementary and intermediate piano works. In the words of Gerald Abraham:

Kabalevsky was “struck by the almost complete lack in Russia [during] that period of suitable material: very easy pieces that would help children to conquer technical difficulties and at the same time begin to form their taste. He set out to fill the gap himself…” Although Kabalevsky wrote a number of advanced piano pieces, the majority of his repertoire was written for educational purposes. Some of his best-known works are:

- Op. 3, *Album of Children’s Pieces*
- Op. 6, *Piano Sonata No. 1 in F major*
- Op. 14, *From Pioneer Life, Pieces for Piano*

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Due to the sheer volume of Kabalevsky’s music written for the aspiring pianist, it is impractical to give full attention to each of these collections. Op. 39 is a good collection to look at, given its wide use and popularity. The collection opens at a beginner’s level and slowly progresses in difficulty (Figures 5.18, 5.19, and 5.20).
1 Melody

Figure 5.18: Opening piece from Twenty-Four Pieces for Children, Op. 39

19 Prelude

Figure 5.19: Piece No. 19, legato versus staccato
Kabalevsky often uses the five-finger pattern in one or both hands, making the pieces more accessible to a beginning student (figures 5.18, 5.19, and 5.20). Another strategy seen in Op. 39 is the use of mixed articulations (figures 5.19 and 5.20) and mixed modes (figure 5.20). Kabalevsky often used modulation, at times rather abruptly (figures 5.19 and 5.20). It is not until numbers 21 to 24 that Kabalevsky abandoned the five-finger pattern entirely. The last piece is the most challenging in the opus. It is in a more complex key, is set in a faster tempo, and has a RH figure spanning the entire range of the treble clef (figure 5.21).
Kabalevsky also wrote very often in sequences and patterns as is seen in figure 5.22. The technique of writing with repeated motives allows the student to become well acquainted with the piece in just a few short measures, making further study of the work much easier. After the motive becomes familiar to the student, the piece can also become an exercise in switching hand positions or making quick leaps on the keyboard.
Kabalevsky wrote the majority of his pieces on a foundation of chords, scales, and arpeggios. If a student is familiar with these technical abilities, they will have a head start in learning his and other composers’ repertoire. It is imperative, therefore, that these concepts are introduced early in an instructor’s educational curriculum.

**Recommended Editions:**

- *Kabalevsky: Short Pieces for Piano* (Selections from Opuses, 3/86, 14, 27, 60, 61, 88, and “Commedian’s Gallop”), Schirmer Edition
Chapter 6: Contemporary Pedagogical Composers

Given that we have already discussed keyboard music written by major composers of the modern era, one might wonder why it is necessary to create a separate section for contemporary pedagogical composers. Several factors led to this distinction. First, elementary piano compositions by composers such as Paul Hindemith or Ernest Bloch are excellent pedagogical works that are worth noting and including in this project. However, these composers are also known for their major works in other genres, such as sonatas, string quartets, and symphonies. Second, contemporary pedagogical composers, whose works focus primarily on pieces for piano students, are a relatively recent phenomenon (since the early decades of the 20th century). These composers often write music that prepares the student for intermediate works from all periods and styles, and much of this music is currently being taught to thousands of piano students. Given their unique focus and pedagogical value, such composers deserve a separate discussion.

It is important to note that piano methods themselves are not discussed in this section. My desire is to discuss full-length compositions, rather than individual compositions and collections that were written within the frame and guidelines of a method. However, there is often an overlap between composers who wrote for methods and those who wrote individual pieces or collections.

It is easy to find piano literature written by modern pedagogical composers. As many of them are still living, their works are released on a regular basis, and their pieces are often featured on the shelves of music stores or on the websites of sheet music sellers. Given the
great number of such composers, instructors must examine the individual pieces in order to choose the ones that may be appropriate for a given student’s taste and ability. Modern technology has made this task easier, as many online dealers offer sample pages of these pieces.

The composers listed in the following pages are well-known for their extensive pedagogical background and their ability to meet the needs of students at every stage of study. It is imperative for a piano instructor to research and seek out the works of such composers.

**Rocherolle, Eugénie**

A native of New Orleans, Eugénie Rocherolle (1936 - ) graduated with a BA in music from Tulane University. She spent her junior year in Paris, where she took a class with the late Nadia Boulanger. Originally a composer for choral and band music, her first collection of solos, *Six Moods for Piano* (1978), garnered her national recognition. Over the course of her career, Rocherolle wrote a great number of educational piano works, including solo sheets, collections, and duets. She was also a sought-after arranger, whose publications include *Disney Classics, Rodgers & Hammerstein: Selected Favorites*, and *Mancini Classics*. She is a member of the *American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP); Connecticut Composers Inc.; National Federation of Music Clubs*; and the *Music Teachers National Association (MTNA)*. In 1995, Rocherolle was honored as the Outstanding Newcomb Alumna by Tulane University.

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One of Rocherolle’s first published works for keyboard, “Mini-March”, from *Six Moods for Piano* (1978), reveals techniques that are also present in many of her later works. This piece is in ABA form and opens with a steady ostinato bass line (figure 6.1).

![Figure 6.1: “Mini-March”](image)

In the B section, she moves away from repeated staccato bass notes, and in their place, introduces a linear walking line with increased chromaticism in the RH. The section closes with a deceptive cadence to G major (figure 6.2). This piece exposes the student to the dotted eighth note rhythms of a march, along with the challenge of playing complex and chromatic chords in the RH. This piece also demonstrates the value of studying chord progressions, as much of the RH is comprised of various chord inversions.
Figure 6.2: Page 2 from "Mini-March"

_Pavane_, a solo sheet published in 2012, contains other elements, such as a RH crossover technique, that are frequently seen in Rocherolle’s writing. Again, there are ostinato elements in the LH, and the RH crosses over the LH as the melody shifts to a lower range (figure 6.3). Although this piece was written in 2012, it contains many Romantic era elements, including long lyrical lines and extensive use of pedal. This work would be fitting as a precursor to Romantic era pieces.

Figure 6.3: Excerpt from “Pavane”
Finally, Rocherolle’s ability to create tasteful arrangements is found in “Climb Ev’ry Mountain”, from Rogers and Hammerstein: Selected Favorites. In this arrangement, Rocherolle uses slow, broken chords in the LH that never span more than an octave to convey a sense of movement, thereby supporting the message found within the piece. The pedal notation is very specific, and its use could create a legato effect. However, Rocherolle instructs the student to play legato intervals in the opening RH, an important technique to acquire.
Figure 6.4: “Climb Ev’ry Mountain”

Recommended Editions:

*Six Moods for Piano*, Neil A. Kjos Music Company

*Tour for Two: Six Duets for One Piano, Four Hands*, Hal Leonard Publishing

*Rogers and Hammerstein: Selected Favorites*, Hal Leonard Publishing

Olson, Lynn Freeman

A native of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Lynn Freeman Olson (1938-1987) attended the MacPhail School of Music and while there, studied with the renowned piano pedagogue Frances Clark. He then attended the University of Minnesota, where he founded the children’s
public radio program, *It’s Time for Music*. During the show’s three years on the air, he wrote more than 200 works for the program. He also composed music for *Captain Kangaroo*, which aired on CBS television. After he graduated, he moved to New Jersey to study once again with Frances Clark. He also opened a teaching studio, which he kept active throughout his career.  

Olson wrote over 1,200 solos and duets and became a sought after speaker and clinician. At the height of his career, he gave talks and presentations in an average of 30 states per year. Olson was a life member of the *National Federation of Music Clubs*, a contributing editor for *Clavier Magazine*, and on the board of directors of the New York Federation of Music Clubs. Olson later moved to New York, where he became an editor and consultant for Alfred Music Publishing.

Many of Olson’s works were written for the early- to mid-elementary level student, making them especially appropriate for beginners. Much of his solo sheets stay within a five-finger position and avoid wide leaps or complex rhythms. One such example is “Folk Dance”, from his book *My First Keyboard Solos* (figure 6.5). Olson also uses clusters (m. 3 and 4), a technique seen frequently in his piano methods and other works.

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While Olson wrote many duets designed for teacher and student, he also wrote duets for two elementary players, such as “Yankee Doodle” (figure 6.6).

Figure 6.5: “Folk Dance”

Figure 6.6: “Yankee Doodle”
In addition, Olson wrote many works for late elementary to intermediate level students, always in a manner that was approachable for the student pianist. He did this by using consistent intervals (such as parallel 5ths or 6ths), writing hand position changes within one octave, and allowing ample time, by the use of rests, for the student to find their new hand position (figure 6.7). We also see the influence of Frances Clark, as Olson incorporates musical aspects that the student has already experienced into the titles of his pieces. For instance, the piece “High Steppers” reinforces the use of the 6th. Also, by adding a ‘blue’ note (E-flat) in measure 5, as part of the IV7 chord, Olson is able to turn this excerpt into a small blues progression.
Olson also edited an extensive number of Alfred Music Publications, including works by Debussy, Grieg, Tcherepnin, Heller, and Kuhlau, as well as many compilations and albums.

**Recommended Editions:**

*First Favorite Solos,* Alfred Publishing

*First Favorite Duets,* Alfred Publishing

*Beginning Sonatinas,* Alfred Publishing

*Finger Fitness: Exercises and Etudes for Healthy Piano Hands,* Carl Fischer Edition

*Music Pathways: A Piano Method* by Louise Bianchi, Lynn Freeman Olson, and Marvin Blickenstaff
Boyd, Bill

Bill Boyd (1933-2001) was an active pianist in New York City and Long Island, playing for hotels and private clubs. He received a master’s degree from Columbia University and taught junior high school bands for over 20 years. After retiring, he devoted much of his time to arranging and composing. His methods for beginning students include *Think Jazz* and *Jazz Starters*. For many teachers, there is relatively little information on how to teach jazz and very few methods devoted to the topic. However, Boyd was “known for his ability to impart the true essence of jazz even in his primer level pieces, such as his *Jazz Prelims*.”\(^{84}\) Boyd’s philosophy, that it was “never too early to begin the study of jazz,” is reflected in his arrangements, which were very well received.\(^{85}\)

One example of Boyd’s compositional style can be found in “Chill Out”, a piece found in his series *Jazz Starters: Elementary Level* (figure 6.8). In this early level piece, Boyd manages to include a number of jazz elements, such as a 12-bar blues form and the presence of “blue” notes, in this case lowered 5ths and 3rds.

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In level 3 of the same series, Boyd includes more jazz elements, such as a walking bass line, increased chromaticism, and instances of harmonic dissonance (see “Too Blue”, figure 6.9).
Finally, when the student reaches the intermediate level, Boyd introduces complex elements, such as improvisation, the use of the dominant seventh chord, and the introduction of various accompaniment patterns when realizing lead sheets (see “Blue Waltz”, figure 6.10).
In jazz music the dominant-seventh chords in the left-hand accompaniment often appear with just the third and flat seventh.

\[
\begin{align*}
C7 & | 7 \\
F7 & | 7 \\
G7 & | 7
\end{align*}
\]

Jazz pieces are sometimes played in three-four time. The next song, “Blue Waltz,” starts with several dominant-seventh chords.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Slow Swing} & (\frac{3}{4}) \\
C7 & \rightarrow F7 \rightarrow Bb7 \rightarrow A7 \rightarrow D7
\end{align*}
\]

Study the left-hand accompaniment and notice that when the dominant-seventh chords appear, the left hand plays the third and the flat seventh.

**INTERPRETATION:** Follow the slurring carefully • Observe the dynamics (loud and soft) • Look for the flat seventh notes.

**BLUE WALTZ**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Slow Jazz Waltz} & (\frac{3}{4}) \\
C7 & \rightarrow F7 \rightarrow Bb7 \rightarrow A7
\end{align*}
\]

Figure 6.10: “Blue Waltz,” demonstrating use of extended chords
Boyd also wrote a number of arrangements and supplemental materials, such as *Charlie Brown’s Greatest Hits*, *The Best of Andrew Lloyd Webber*, and *Great Jazz Standards*. Boyd’s carefully graded methods, alongside his compilations and arrangements of jazz standards, make his works suitable for students of all ages and abilities.

**Recommended Editions:**

- *Jazz Starters* (Levels 1-3), Hal Leonard Publishing
- *Think Jazz – A Jazz Piano Method*, Hal Leonard Publishing
- *Great Jazz Standards*, Hal Leonard Publishing

**Vandall, Robert.**

Robert Vandall (1944-2017) was a distinguished and nationally recognized composer, clinician, and piano pedagogue. In 1966, he earned a BM in piano performance from Baldwin-Wallace College; and in 1968, he received an MM in piano performance from the University of Illinois. After teaching music theory, group piano, and keyboard literature for nine years in community colleges in Springfield, IL, and Flat River, OH, he settled in Philadelphia, where he kept an active piano studio with his wife, Karen.

Vandall soon became recognized as an avid composer of educational piano works. Throughout his career, he gave workshops in over 30 US states and appeared at many state and national conventions of the MTNA. He held a permanent professional certification from MTNA and was commissioned to write piano solos and duets by nearly 20 state music associations of piano teachers. In 1990, he was awarded the University of Illinois School of Music Alumni Association’s Distinguished Service Award.86

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Vandall’s early pieces were written as individual solo sheets and were character pieces with titles such as *North Broadway Blues*, *Daydream*, and *Sliding on the Ice*. These works include both solos and duets. *Daydream* (figure 6.11), published in 1984, is a piece that includes many instructive elements that may be new to an elementary pianist. For example, the damper pedal is used throughout, producing an ethereal, dreamlike sound quality. In the opening, the RH thumb plays the melody, notated by tenuto accents, leaving the rest of the RH to create harmonic support in a harp-like fashion. In the B section, the LH plays the melody in a higher range, crossing over the RH, again notated with tenuto accents. The opening theme then returns after the LH finishes its melodic section, creating an ABA form. There are several instructive elements in this piece: the extensive use of pedal, using the thumb to bring out a melody, and crossing the LH over the RH.

![Figure 6.11: "Daydream"](image_url)
As Vandall’s career progressed, he began writing pieces in sets and collections. A fine example is *Modes and Moods*, which was published in 1989. This work is comprised of seven character pieces in each of the seven keyboard modes. Another one of his more popular collections is *Preludes*, which is comprised of 24 piano solos in all major and minor keys and was published in 2006. This collection is certainly an echo of Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*. In it, we find pieces that vary greatly in mood, tempo, and texture. The pieces also vary in level, and the edition states that it is designed for “Exam Grades 2-7.”87 One example is “Prelude No. 7 in B Minor”, subtitled “Chaconne”, which is reminiscent of the first movement of Beethoven’s Op. 27 “Moonlight” Sonata, with its stately inverted triplets set in a minor key (figure 6.12). This piece would be appropriate for a student who is not quite ready for the technical demands of Beethoven’s “Moonlight”.

![Figure 6.12: “Prelude No. 7 in B Minor”](image)

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Vandall’s other compilations include five volumes each (graded by level) of *Celebrated Piano Duets, Celebrated Christmas Duets, Celebrated Lyrical Solos, Celebrated Jazzy Solos,* and *Celebrated Virtuosic Solos.* The three volumes of *Robert D. Vandall’s Favorite Solos* contain many of the individual sheets that he published over the years. He was also a contributor to the popular *Alfred’s Premier Piano Course.* Robert Vandall will certainly be remembered as one of the most influential and prolific educational piano composers of the twentieth century.

**Recommended Editions:**

- *Complete Preludes,* Alfred Publishing
- *Robert D. Vandall’s Favorite Solos,* Alfred Publishing
- *Celebrated Piano Duets,* Alfred Publishing

**Mier, Martha**

Martha Mier (1936 - ) is a nationally recognized arranger and prolific composer whose compositions appear exclusively in over 200 Alfred Publications. Her most popular set of books is *Jazz, Rags & Blues,* which are graded 1-5, corresponding to late elementary, early intermediate, late intermediate, and early advanced levels. Although she composed some pieces for the advanced level as well, most of her pieces fall into the elementary and intermediate category.

Many of Mier’s pieces are written as individual solo sheets, such as *Autumn Glow* (figure 6.13), *Midnight Shadows* and *Ladybug Lullaby.* Others are featured in compilations, such as *Celebrate America, Romantic Impressions,* and *Musical Snapshots.* The popularity of her

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pieces, along with her prolific output, gave rise to the series, *The Best of Mier* and *Martha Mier’s Greatest Solos*, graded 1-3. Mier was also invited to be a co-author of Alfred’s latest piano method, *Alfred’s Premier Piano Course*, which debuted in 2007.

![Autumn Glow](image)

*Figure 6.13: “Autumn Glow”*

One advantage of incorporating Mier’s works into a teacher’s repertoire is that the pieces are clearly graded and offer a variety of styles. Part of Martha Mier’s appeal lies in the fact that her compositions resemble the more popular genres of today, making them good counterparts to standard piano literature.

**Recommended Editions:**

*Martha Mier’s Favorite Solos*, Books 1, 2, and 3, Alfred Publishing

*The Best of Martha Mier*, Books 1, 2, and 3, Alfred Publishing
Chapter 7: Conclusion

Piano methods have their well-deserved place in piano instruction, but there can be a rough transition as a student graduates from these methods and approaches intermediate repertoire, especially if the student has only been exposed to methods. It is my hope that this document will aid piano instructors as they search for piano literature that goes beyond what they find in their methods. If pieces by Schumann, Haydn, Bartók, Kabalevsky, and others are introduced at the elementary level to complement these methods, a student will have a much smoother transition into intermediate compositions by these and other composers. When taught alongside methods, these elementary pieces can complement and augment the student’s understanding of the techniques found within these methods.

The existence of these pieces is certainly known to educated piano pedagogues at universities and colleges. However, the everyday teacher might be unaware of them. This document is by no means comprehensive, but it will point modern instructors to some of the best elementary piano literature written between the seventeenth and twenty-first centuries.

The examples presented here represent only a small sample of what can be found in the opuses and collections recommended.

The early years of a student’s keyboard instruction are often the most crucial in determining whether a student will continue studying with a sense of interest and commitment. These years are important as students form a relationship with their instrument and are introduced to progressively more advanced concepts, such as dynamics, articulation, phrasing, and pedal. While it is expected that intermediate and advanced students will play literature by great composers, students at the elementary level are often robbed of exposure to such repertoire. I hope this project helps to fill that gap, thereby improving the keyboard education of our youngest and most promising students.
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