

Leveling Piano Music by Black Composers

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents for their undying support and sacrifices they have made to allow me to study classical piano music. I also dedicate this to piano students and teachers who actively seek to bring broader representation and diversity to the classical piano pedagogy field.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the Center for Black Music Research, The Library of Congress, Syracuse University, Archives of African American Music Collection at Indiana University, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture for their well documented and large collection of music by Black composers which has greatly impacted my work. I would also like to acknowledge the chair of my committee, Dr. John Ellis, who has supported and encouraged my research efforts. Finally, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Carlos Simon, one of the most gifted composers of our time who inspires me professionally and personally each day.

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ABSTRACT

Two dissertation recitals and one piano pedagogy workshop were presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts (Music: Piano Pedagogy and Performance) at the University of Michigan. The music presented on the two piano recitals featured collections of dances, preludes, and Negro melodies.

The first dissertation recital was presented on Saturday, April 15th, 2017 in Stamps Auditorium. The program included *Preludes* No. 7, No. 8, and No. 9 by Fredrico Mompou and *Preludes* Op. 32, No. 5 in G Major and Op. 32, No. 10 in B minor by Sergei Rachmaninoff. A collection of dances were also performed on this program which featured *French Suite No. 5 in G Major BWV 816* by Johann Sebastian Bach and *Danzas Argentinas* by Alberto Ginastera. The second half of the program featured music by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. “Deep River” Op. 59, No. 10 from *24 Negro Melodies* for piano solo was performed as well as *Five Negro Melodies* for piano trio.

The lecture recital, *Uncovering The Negro Melodies of America* was presented on Saturday, December 9th, 2017 in Stamps Auditorium. This lecture recital explored the origin, evolution, and cultural relevance of Spirituals through selected works in Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s *24 Negro Melodies*, Op. 59. The pieces performed from this collection were, “I’m Troubled in Mind,” “Many Thousand Gone,” “Going Up,” “Steal Away” and “The Angels Changed My Name.” There were also three vocalist on this program who sang excerpts of each spiritual.

The Pedagogy Workshop, *Leveling Piano Music by Black Composers*, was presented on Saturday, April 21st, 2018 in Stamps Auditorium. This workshop presented leveled piano music by Black composers. This presentation highlighted the unique pedagogical approaches of piano music by Black composers and advocates for their inclusion into the standard teaching repertoire.

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Recital 1 Program
Saturday, April 15th, 2017
Walgreen Drama Center, Stamps Auditorium
5:30 PM

Preludes
No. 7 "Palmier d'etoiles"
No. 8
No. 9

Fredrico Mompou
(1893-1987)

French Suite No. 5 in G Major BWV 816
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Gavotte
Bouree
Loure
Gigue

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Preludes, Op. 32
No. 5 in G Major
No. 10 in B Minor

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Danzas Argentinas
Danza del viejo boyero
Danza del la moza donosa
Danza del gaucho matrero

Alberto Ginastera
(1916-1983)

Deep River Op. 59, No. 10 from *24 Negro Melodies*

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
(1875-1912)

Five Negro Melodies for Piano Trio
Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child
I Was Way Down A-Yonder
Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel
They Will Not Lend Me A Child
My Lord Delivered Daniel

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Anita Dumar, violin
Lindsey Sharpe, cello

Recital 2 Program

Saturday, December 9th, 2017
Walgreen Drama Center, Stamps Auditorium
5:30 PM

From *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies, Op. 59*

Im Troubled In Mind, no. 14

Many Thousand Gone, no. 17

Going Up, no. 13

Steal Away, no. 23

The Angels Changed My Name, no. 9

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
(1875-1912)

Rehanna Thelwell & Olivia Johnson, mezzo-soprano
Darius A. Dillard, tenor

Abstract
Leveling Piano Music By Black Composers

Although Black composers' contributions in the field of classical piano literature have been enormously significant, the standard teaching and performance repertoire in piano has largely failed to include their important work. By highlighting eighteen Black composers and thirty-three piano pieces from the 1700's to the 21st century, this paper aims to help remedy the lack of inclusion of piano music by Black composers in the standard teaching repertoire, and on the concert music stage.

The music discussed in this paper is ordered by skill level. Leveling the music by Black composers aims to help teachers incorporate this music at the appropriate skill level for their students. This paper also assists teachers in their understanding of the specific pedagogical benefits of each piece. By discussing the musical and technical challenges of selected pieces by Black composers, this paper will serve as a resource for piano pedagogues, performers, and students at all skill levels.

Introduction: A Call For Representation

In 2016, the movie, *Hidden Figures*, based on the novel by Margot Lee Shetterly, put a spotlight on African American female mathematicians who worked at the National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA) in the 1960s. This biographical film exposed the significant contributions that Black females made in NASA during the Space Race which had largely gone unnoticed until the movie was premiered, nearly fifty years after their work. *Hidden Figures*, was nominated for Best Adapted Screen Play, Best Picture, and Best Supporting Actress at the 2016 Academy Awards. This movie was successful because it highlighted intelligent, powerful, and positively influential Black characters whose influential work is often times “hidden” in our society. In the same way, classical music often fails to highlight the significant contributions by Black composers. In my opinion the composers discussed in this paper are the *Hidden Figures* in the classical piano field.

PART ONE PURPOSE OF STUDY

There are three widely known piano pedagogical resources, *The Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire* by Maurice Hinson, *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* by Jane Magrath, and *A History of Keyboard Literature: Music for the Piano and its Forerunners* by Stewart Gordon that many pedagogues consult when selecting literature at the appropriate skill level for their students. Not only do most piano pedagogues use these three resources as a tool for selecting repertoire, but many universities use these books as a resource to help prepare the next generation of piano pedagogues. These staple piano pedagogy resources significantly lack references to the works by Black composers. Because these resources fail to recognize an adequate number of works by Black composers, teachers are not well equipped to diversify their teaching repertoire and thus rich music of these Black composers remains voiceless.

The Royal Conservatory is a celebrated and widely used music methodology in North America. This program presents a sequenced music curriculum and syllabus for students at various skill levels. Though the Royal conservatory makes wonderful aims towards including music by Canadian composers and female composers, the program still severely fails to expose students and teachers to music by Black composers. For example, there are no compositions by African Americans included in the Royal Conservatory Program within the beginning level (Level One) through early advanced levels (Level Eight). Even then, there is a single etude by Oscar Peterson (Level Nine), and two solo repertoire pieces represented by Nathaniel Dett and Scott Joplin (Level Ten) towards the end of this curriculum series. A student will not be exposed

to any works by African American composers until they have reached the most advanced levels in this program.

When asked to be given a percentage of the representation of Black composers in the piano curriculum, the publishing department responded by saying that the Royal Conservatory “does not track this information [when] compiling music for the RCM series.” This statement is notable for its lack of consideration and awareness of the importance for creating a more inclusive methodology series for teachers and students.

Between the most widely known piano pedagogical resources and piano methodologies in the field, there is a significant lack of inclusion of Black piano compositions which highlights the desperate need to bring this music to the forefront in piano teaching literature. The data presented also shows the exciting opportunity to create greater cultural relevance and participation across all the dividing lines of our society to make the piano teaching literature more diverse and inclusive.

Efforts That Have Been Made

In the early twentieth century, great efforts had been made by many musicologists to document the works of Black composers. Helen Walker-Hill, musicologist and scholar of music by African American women provided both literary and musical resources that had never been previously made available. Her books include: *Piano Music By Black Women Composers: A Catalogue of Solo and Ensemble Works*, and *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African American Women Composers and Their Music*. Walker also published a musical collection of piano music by African-American female composers who were highlighted in her literary books. In this collection of music, over a century of piano works is represented.

In 1970, concert pianist Natalie Leota Henderson Hinderas produced a monumental recording of piano music by African American composers. Hinderas was the youngest pianist to receive her Bachelor of Science degree in music from Oberlin Conservatory. She then later studied at The Juilliard School of Music and Philadelphia Conservatory. This recording featured performances of twentieth century Black composers and serves as a hallmark for bringing the music of African American composers to the forefront. The liner notes of this CD recalls how controversial this recording was when it was released due to the fact that it forced audience members to acknowledge the highly intellectual and wide range of music that African Americans had contributed to the piano repertoire which had previously not been acknowledged. Hinderas states that her mission was to record music by “outstanding musicians of a handful of American composers, each of whom was an African American.”¹

¹ Dominique-Rene deLerma, liner notes to *Piano Music by African American Composers*, Natalie Hinderas, CRI 629, 1993.

In 2007, William H. Chapman Nyaho edited, *Piano Music of Africa and the African Diaspora*. Chapman-Nyaho was raised in Ghana and attended the Conservatory de Musique de Genève. He later attended Eastman School of Music, and the University of Texas, Austin. He has championed piano music by African composers. This collection of music highlights many Black composers from the African continent as well as the states, while organizing the music by difficulty.

Walker, Hinderas, and Chapman-Nyaho have supplied a wealth of scholarly work and rich musical offerings by African and African decent composers. This dissertation, coupled with its musical recording, aims to add to the canon created by these scholars, knowing that all that has been brought forth, still, only scratches the surface of all that has been produced. This compilation of music to be discussed is vital to students, teachers and scholars. Bringing forth the piano music by Black composers has the potential to widen the demographic of students who wish to study classical piano because greater representation has been created while breaking the stigma that classical music is an elitist art form solely created by white, European, males. It allows for greater creativity in teaching by providing a wider range of repertoire that exhibits unique pedagogical offerings.

PART TWO LEVELING

Leveling Overview

Leveling is a system that is used by pedagogues to gradually order music based on the musical and technical difficulties of a piece. Leveling acknowledges that there are more complex layers than the broad categories of beginner, intermediate, and advance.

One of the biggest challenges that pedagogues face is selecting appropriate repertoire to help facilitate in the advancement of a student's studies. The 'ideal' student would be one who has developed technical, musical, theoretical, and aural skills at relatively the same pace, however, this 'ideal' student is hardly the norm that most teachers encounter. In reality, many students can have great strengths in one area and large holes in others. Transfer students, particularly, can exhibit these wide ranges in musical development which can make the path to teaching such a student ambiguous. Leveling creates a guided path on how to progress a student systematically through repertoire selection.

Many method books and keyboard literature that use leveling model their repertoire selections based on a numeric system where Level One represents the most fundamental musical and technical challenges, while Level Ten represents more advanced musical and technical challenges. In Jane Magrath's, *The Pianist Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*, Magrath characterizes the numeric leveling (one to ten) as repertoire that represents "beginning to early-advanced levels."²

² Jane Magrath *The Pianist Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*, Alfred Publishing Co., 1995. xi

Magrath gives repertoire examples to help characterize each level.

Level One: volume one of Bartók *Mikrokosmos*.

Level Two: Türk *Pieces for Beginners*

Level Three: Latour Sonatinas; Kabalevsky *Pieces for Young People*, Op. 39

Level Four: *Anna Magdalena Bach Notebook*; Gurlitt *Album for the Young*, Op. 140;

Tchaikovsky *Album for the Young*, Op. 39

Level Five: *Anna Magdalena Bach Notebook*; Sonatinas by Attwood, Lynes; Menotti

Poemetti

Level Six: Clementi *Sonatinas*, Op. 36; Burgmüller *25 Progressive Pieces*, Op. 100

Level Seven: Kuhlau and Diabelli Sonatinas; Bach and “easier” *Two-Part Inventions*;

Bach *Little Preludes*; Dello Joio *Lyric Pieces for the Young*

Level Eight: “Moderately difficult” Bach *Two-Part Inventions*; Beethoven easier

variations sets; Field Nocturnes; Schumann *Album Leaves*, Op. 124;

Schubert Waltzes; Turina *Miniatures*

Level Nine: “Easier” Bach *Three-Part Inventions*; “easiest” Haydn Sonata

movements; easiest Mendelssohn *Song Without Words*; “easiest” Chopin

Mazurkas

Level Ten: Bach *Three-Part Inventions*; “easiest” Chopin Nocturnes; Beethoven

Sonatas, Op. 49, 79; Mozart *Sonata*, K. 283; Muczynski *Preludes*³

³ Magrath, *The Pianist Guide*, xi

This paper will level the pieces being discussed after the approach of Jane Magrath. By leveling music in an organized manner, a teacher would be able to select piano music by Black composers at any stage of a student's musical development.

Collection of Children's Pieces

A child's mind is fascinating and full of imagination. One of the most rewarding experiences of teaching is tapping into the fantastical world of a child to foster successful and relatable concepts that bridge the student's world to the music. Many composers have written music for children by creating works that engage the student's imagination while presenting pedagogical challenges to help develop the young musician's skills.

The standard piano teaching repertoire is full of many collections of pieces written for children in mind. For example, *Album for the Young*, written by Schumann in 1848, was written for his three young daughters. While there are forty-three short pieces in the album, the first eighteen pieces were written for beginning students and was originally sold separately from the pieces in the album. The later pieces, though imaginative and fruitful in their pedagogical offerings, are more demanding both technically and musically. With the exception of No. 12, "Knecht Ruprecht," *The Pianists's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* levels the first eighteen pieces in *Album for the Young* as music appropriate for students at Levels Two through Five.⁴ All pieces have highly imaginative titles and present specific musical and technical challenges for the young pianist. In the same way, many Black composers have written music specifically for children in mind.

The following pieces are collections of piano works by Black composers that are suitable for students at Level One through Level Four.

⁴ Magrath, *The Pianist Guide*, 237.

Collection of Children’s Pieces By Black Composers (Level 1-4)

Piano Teaching Pieces by Florence Price:

Florence Price (1887-1953) was a prolific Black composer who not only wrote piano music for advanced students, but took care to compose for her young piano students. Price was one of the first Black female composers to gain national recognition for her performances and compositions. She also became the first Black composers to have music performed by major orchestras.⁵

In 2015, Dr. Lia Jensen-Abbott, pianist and educator, compiled two volumes of Price’s *Piano Teaching Music*. The music presented in these two volumes is largely music appropriate for students at Level One. Examples in her first volume include “Little Pieces on White Keys” and “Little Pieces on Black Keys.” These pieces are wonderful teaching tools to help the early pianist familiarize themselves with the geography of the keyboard. Volume two differs in volume one in that Price provides specific pedagogical “purposes” that Price describes herself before each piece. For example, the first piece in volume two, titled, “Autumn Echoes” states: “Purpose: Development of imagination and expression.” Another piece in volume two titled, “Little Miss Muffet” purpose is to help develop “Hand-shifts.” These two volumes prove that Price knew that writing music that helped develop the student’s piano skills was just as important as creating music that fostered a student’s imagination.

⁵ Slonimsky,, N. (ed.), *The Concise Edition of Baker’s Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, 8th end, New York: Shirmer, 1994, 791.

Other pieces in these collections pedagogical challenges for the beginner in a particularly creative way. The two pieces that will be discussed in these collections both come from volume one and are titled, “The Froggie and The Rabbit” and “On Higher Ground.”

"The Froggie and The Rabbit” by Florence Price

The “Froggie and The Rabbit” is a delightful Level One piano piece that helps develop a solid hand position for the early beginner piano student while simultaneously challenging the student to explore phrase structure. The right hand of this piece remains in the F Major hand position, while the left hand remains in the middle C Major hand position through the entirety of the piece. By keeping both hands locked in a position in the treble clef, the student is able to closely follow the contour of the melody. Price presents a stepwise ascending five finger motive, followed by two descending skips which outlines the F Major chord in root position for the right hand. This motivic idea is then transposed to the left hand in C Major.

Price writes this piece in a 6/8 time signature. The rhythm is repeated exactly in each hand through the alternating quarter note, eighth note pattern. The student is able to feel the big beats on the thumb, middle, and fifth finger in both hands which again outlines in major chords. This helps the student feel the beats internally and within the hand.

(Figure 1. “The Froggie and the Rabbit)



Price presents quite a few musical challenges within this short piece. Beats one and four fall on the thumb, middle, and fifth finger. In a 6/8 meter, beginning students often try to use their wrist to accent beats one and four. The goal of this piece is for the student to feel the 6/8 pulse while maintaining a legato phrase that is shaped in both hands. Each phrase is marked legato which is Price’s original markings. The teacher should encourage the student to begin the piece at a piano dynamic marking and crescendo to the fifth scale degree. The student should feel the smooth transfer of weight between the fingers. The phrase ends in the second measure and the student should taper the end of the phrase. Tapering the end of the phrase presents another musical challenge as the first phrase ends on the thumb of the right hand which could lead to an unwanted accentuation

“The Froggie and the Rabbit” is such an imaginative title that lends to the student and teacher exploring creative ways to bring the music and animals to life! This piece has two distinct characters that are perhaps conversing with each other. The music should portray this dialogue between the two characters. The ending of this piece is incredibly charming and also lends to creative exploration. The right hand ends on a quarter note tonic F and on the down beat. The left hand literally jumps down to F below middle C on the fourth beat. Both hands should lift

out of the tonic F's as if the frog and the rabbit had jumped away from each other, ending their conversation.

This eight bar piece by Florence Price is a pedagogical gem for young pianist. Not only does the beginning piano student gain the opportunity to develop a solid hand position and work on phrase structure, the student is also given the opportunity to understand pulse and large beats within a 6/8 meter. The young student will also enjoy investigating imaginative and fantastical ways to depict the conversation had between the frog and rabbit.

“On Higher Ground”

“On Higher Ground” helps develop the young pianist's bass clef ledger line reading. Ledger line reading usually appears in later levels in a child's piano studies though ledger line reading can be found as early as the first volume of Bartok's *Mikrokosmos*, which largely represents musical material suitable for a student whose reading skills is at Level One. The later pieces in *Mikrokosmos* volume one would be more appropriate for students in Level Two or Level Three, due to the greater rhythmic and contrapuntal variety presented. The only bass clef ledger lines presented in the first volume of *Mikrokosmos* is Middle C and the D above Middle C.

Though Middle C, Middle D, Middle E, Middle F, and Middle G are all presented as bass clef ledger lines in “On Higher Ground,” the simplicity of hand coordination and rhythmic variety makes it a unique level one piece. The hands never play together simultaneously and the only rhythmic values presented are quarter notes and half notes.

The left hand is ‘grounded’ in the C Major hand position. The left hand fifth finger plays the lowest note of the piece, Middle C, which acts a familiar anchor and landmark for the student. The left hand begins this piece on a quarter note Middle C with a leap up to a quarter note F. The right hand then enters on the same F, now written in the treble clef. The next entrance of the left hand begins with Middle C again, but this time, leaps to the fifth, G. Price is presenting the intervallic relationship between fifths and fourths and what these intervals look like on the grand staff as bass clef ledger lines.

(Figure 2. “On Higher Ground”)



She demonstrates these relationships by always reverting back to Middle C as a visual landmark. Each entrance, up to measure eleven of the left hand always begins with Middle C.

Now that the student is familiar with F and G as ledger lines, Price brilliantly begins a measure for the first time with G instead of Middle C. By asking the student to begin with G, the student is forced to recognize this note without the reference of Middle C. Price descends the five finger pattern (G, F, E, D), repeating each note twice and then ending the piece on Middle C.

(Figure 2a. “On Higher Ground”)



The focus of this teaching piece is to build the reading skills and ledger line recognition of the student. While there are no ledger lines presented in the right hand, Price presents the fourth and fifth intervallic relationship with the right hand as well while remaining in the F Major hand position. The right hand position is required to make a shift up a step, or to a “higher ground” to the G minor hand position at measure 8. This is preceded by a two beat rest to allow the student enough time to make this transition. This piece includes a *da capo al fine* which asks the student to move the right hand from the G minor hand position, back down a step to the F Major hand position. Again, Price gives the student ample time to make this transition by allowing the student four whole beats before the right hand returns to the F Major hand position.

“On Higher Ground” is such a wonderful title for this piece because the student is able to see, hear, and feel both hands playing notes with large ascending leaps and position changes. This piece presents a creative way of introducing ledger lines, perhaps much sooner than most method books, but successfully presents the material in a effective pedagogical way for the early beginning piano student.

Plantation Songs In Easy Arrangement for the Piano by Blanche K. Thomas:

Blanche K. Thomas (1885-1977), a graduate of The Juilliard School of Music, was a prize winning composer and educator. Thomas dedicated her life to educating the youth of Harlem, NY and exposing them to the rich music by African Americans.⁶ In the introduction of these spirituals, Thomas writes about the importance of youth having folk music as part of their learning. She writes:

“The repertoire of any musician is incomplete unless it contains some folk-music. All of the great composers have realized this, and folk songs have been used in many of their great works...The deep pathos, the sincere appeal to all peoples, the simple yet beautiful melodies, the rich harmonies of the Negro Spirituals have caused these songs to live, and they will continue to live for a long time. As teaching material for young people, they are here presented in arrangements for piano.”⁷

With youth in mind, Thomas composed this collection of spirituals to be used as a teaching tool for young pianist. This collection contains twelve spirituals as well as rhythmic exercises before each spiritual. The collection contains isolated technical scale passages and how they should be practiced before the student begins a piece. The addition of rhythmic and technical exercises included in these studies are a wonderful addition for both students and teachers.

⁶ Helen Walker Hill, *Piano Music by Black Women Composers* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992), 104

⁷ Blanch Thomas. *Plantation Songs in Easy Piano Arrangements for the Piano*. N.d. New York: Schirmer, 1937. Print

Including technical studies in a large collection that address specific pedagogical challenges within a piece has proven to be highly beneficial for students. For example, Franco-Swiss pianist, Alfred Cortot (1877-1962), created an edition of Chopin Études that extracted the technical challenges of the etudes and created exercises that were to be practiced by the student in hopes that once achieved, the student would play the difficult passages with great fluency and ease once they began to study the etude in its entirety. In the same way, Thomas takes great care to create various rhythmic exercises to address the “rhythmic problems which are of great value.” Spirituals possess highly rhythmic patterns that originated from Africa. In the Journal of the International African Institute, Jones writes, “Rhythm is to the African what harmony is to the European and it is the complex interweaving of contrasting rhythmic patterns that he finds his great aesthetic satisfaction.”⁸

The rhythmic complexities presented in spirituals makes these particular songs wonderful additions to the teaching repertoire.

Along with developing a student’s rhythmic understanding, Blanche K. Thomas writes that these pieces should be used as simple transposition exercise as well. Transposition is such an important and fundamental skill that often falls by wayside in many piano method books or is presented in a manner that is isolated from the solo repertoire. Thomas includes the words of the spirituals in the score and encourages the student to sing along as they perform the music. By encouraging the young pianist to sing while they are physically playing, the student is able to develop their aural skills which is a vital aid to their transposition studies.

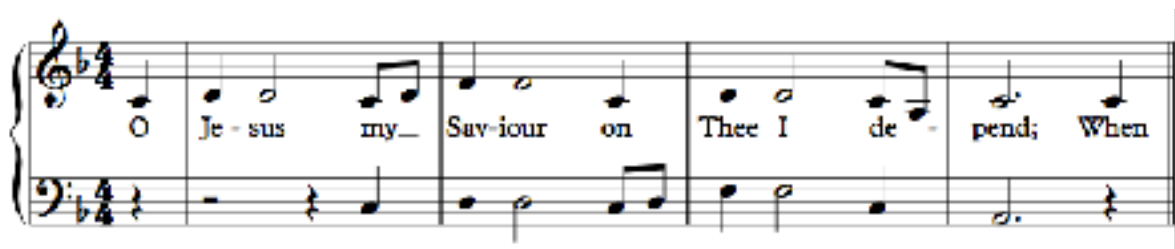
⁸ A.M. Jones, *Studies in African American Music*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 39-40.

Plantation Songs by Thomas is packed with pedagogical offerings for the young pianist and represents music that is suitable for a Level One and Level Two student. The music in *Plantation Songs* fits neatly between the technical and musical levels of Bartok's *Mikrokosmos* and Turk's *Pieces for Beginners*. The following pieces discussed in this collection highlight the scope in leveling and the practical exercises Thomas includes for each piece.

“I'm Troubled in Mind”

The most accessible spiritual in the collection and the only one of three that does not include a rhythmic study is, “I'm Troubled In Mind.” This spiritual includes quarter, half and eighth notes, all of which a Level One student would be familiar with in their development. Though the note values presented in this piece are fundamental, the displacement of strong and weak beats may be unfamiliar to a beginning student. In a 4/4 meter, the student expects to feel strong beats on beats one and four. In this spiritual, beats two and four are emphasized which is common in Negro Spirituals. Having the student singing or speaking the words as they play will also help to develop this shift in accented weak beats. The reading level is standard for Level One, though the student is asked to perform a brief two bar imitation in the left hand.

(Figure 3. “I'm Troubled in Mind”)



Imitation can be challenging for beginning students to coordinate and it is found throughout the first volume of Bartok's *Mikrokosmos*

(Figure 4. Bartok *Mikrokosmos* Volume 1, Exercise 22)

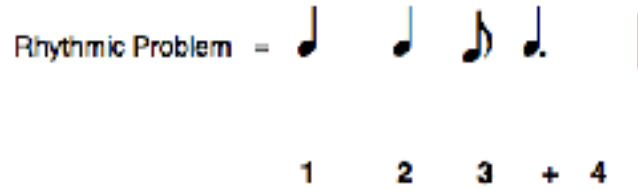


When transposing this piece, Thomas draws attention to mention that this musical example uses the “pure minor scale” or, natural minor scale, and includes a d natural minor scale with fingering for the student.

“Go Down, Moses”

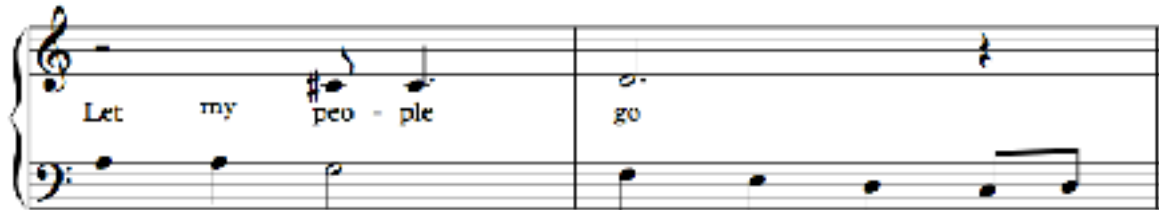
“Go Down Moses” may be a familiar song to students who have been exposed to African American and/or Jewish culture. This melancholic melody can also be found in *Alfred's Group Piano for Adults Book 1* as one of its harmonization exercises. Again, the reading level for this piece is at a level one and presents an extremely brief rhythmic “problem” as Thomas characterizes. Thomas uses an asterisk in the score to identify the rhythmic challenges then extracts the rhythmic difficulty for the student at the bottom of the piece.

(Figure 5. “Go Down Moses,” rhythmic problem)



The steady even words, “Let, My” verses the quicker syllables “Peo-ple” can be understood by merely speaking them. The student should also practice tapping the first two beats with the left hand and then tapping beat three with the right hand since this is how the piece divides this rhythmic passage between the hands.

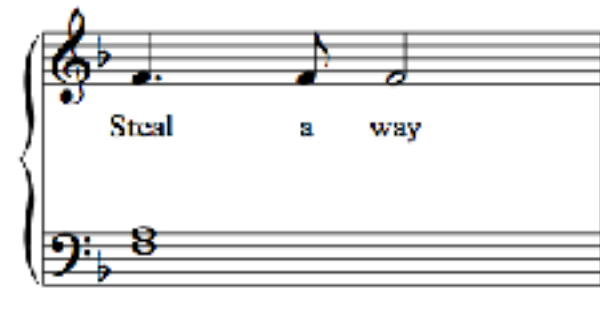
(Figure 5a. “Go Down Moses”)



“Steal Away”

“Steal Away” presents four rhythmic patterns that can be challenging for the student. It is helpful that the first rhythmic challenge is executed by the right hand alone while the left hand holds a whole note.

(Figure 6. “Steal Away”)



This rhythmic pattern is repeated three times in a four bar phrase. The rhythmic challenges in this piece are made easier by not only having both hands play the same rhythm, but also by having both hands play the same notes, two octaves apart.

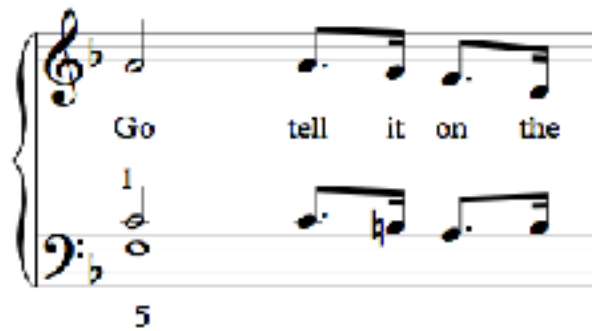
“Go Tell It On The Mountain”

“Go Tell It On The Mountain” is quite similar to the “Die Waldhörner und das Echo,” No. 18 in Turks Pieces For Beginners. Not only are the same rhythmic patterns introduced, the moving note passages in both pieces are both separated by a sixth.

(Figure 7. Turk’s “Die Waldhörner”)



(Figure 8. Thomas’s “Go Tell It On The Mountain”)



This popular melody melody is harmonized in thirds in measure eleven which is a difficult piano pedagogical skills to develop even for a level two student.

Turk uses similar double third passage work in No. 25, “Zur ersten Übung der Terzen und Sexten” in *Pieces for Beginners*.

(Figure 9. Turk’s “Zur ersten Übung der Terze und Sexten” in *Pieces for Beginners*)



This piece also asks the student to be able to play an octave and a minor seventh in the left hand. For students with a small developing hand, this can be a challenge for them to handle such a large interval. For this reason, this piece, which is one of more technically demanding selections aims closer to a late Level Two to an early Level Three piece.

Thomas gives a review at the end of this collection of all of the rhythmic patterns that were discussed and used. She also includes an index of musical terms that were used in the score. These collections of spirituals could be a wonderful way for teachers to introduce challenging rhythmic patterns earlier on in the development of a young student. By referencing the words that follow the natural rhythmic patterns, the student can verbalize the rhythm instead of merely calling out and clapping numbers to music. These familiar melodies that can be sung while being played can also help develop the student's aural skills, especially when the teacher challenges the student to transpose these melodies which Thomas encourages in her introduction to this collection.

12 Country Dances (for the year 1779 set forth for harpsichord) by Ignatius Sancho

Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780) worked as a domestic house slave in Greenwich, England for a wealthy family. Sancho was exposed to many books, music, and theatre after his emancipation. Though he is most known for his literary writing, he was an amateur musician/composer and wrote in the fashionable style gallant style. The author and American scholar, Josephine Wright writes in *An Early African Composer in England: The Collected Editions of His Music in Facsimile* that Sancho was “apparently the first black composer to be published.”⁹

Sancho's collection of *Twelve Country Dances* for harpsichord are short stylistic dances that give descriptions of the physical dance movements that are to be performed with the music. These historic pieces have the ability to help young keyboardist understand the style and purpose

⁹ Josephine R. B. Wright, *An Early African Composer in England: the Collected Editions of His Music in Facsimile*. Garland, 1981.

of this dance music. This music is suitable for Level Three students. Many of the titles in this collection are of prominent figures like, “Lady Mary Montagus,” “Dutchess of Devonshire,” and the “Royal Bishop.” Other descriptive titles of these dances include, “Strawberries and Cream” and “Bushy Park.”

The first dance, “Lady Mary Montagus Reel” is an energetic eight bar dance. The Montagus family was the family who exposed Sancho to the arts. The style and level of this particular dance is comparable to Handel’s Gavotte in G Major, HWV 491. Both pieces have quarter note bass notes with wide intervals while the right hand has running eighth note passage work. Handel’s Gavotte in G Major is listed as a Level Three piece in the Royal Conservatory of Music 2015 syllabus.

(Figure 10. “Lady Mary Montagus Reel”)



(Figure 11. Handel Gavotte in G Major, HWV 491)



In “Lady Mary Montagus Reel,” each four bar phrase is repeated. There are no ornaments written in the music which gives the opportunity for the teacher and student to come up with different ornamentations or experiment with various articulations on the repeat. This music is a wonderful predecessor for the dance music found in Bach suites.

At the end of each piece, Sancho describes the partnered dance movements. Some dance movements are far more descriptive than others. In “Lady Mary Montagus Reel” dance, Sancho writes:

“Right hand across left hands, back again. Cross over one [foot] and turn half round. Right and left at top”¹⁰

This collection of dance music for the keyboard allows the student and teacher to dive into the customs and history of the early classical music world. The student can gain great insight and understanding of this elegant and balanced music as they play while imagining royalty dancing to the music that they perform.

Ten Short Essays by Ulysses Kay

Ulysses Kay (1917-1995) was an African American composer who had the opportunity to study with some of the most influential composers of the twentieth century. He was encouraged to compose by William Grant Still and studied at Yale University under Paul Hindemith. Kay received his Bachelor's of Music degree from University of Arizona and his M.M. from the Eastman School of Music. He also studied at Columbia University and later became a Fulbright scholar.¹¹

When asked about the music educational systems Kay responded that the educational systems have a responsibility “to make the extensive works and influences of Blacks known and to give blacks credit for the same.”¹² When speaking on his own works, Kay highlights that his

¹⁰ Ignatius Sancho. *12 Country Dances*. 1779. London: S. and A. Thompson, 1779. Print

¹¹ David Baker, *The Black Composer Speaks*, (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978) 139.

¹² Baker, *The Black Composer Speaks*, 142

compositional process starts with a basic “musical idea which might be a theme, a motif, or a progression, and then I work from there trying to bring the idea to its fullest fruition.”¹³

Though Ulysses Kay is best known for his choral and symphonic compositions, he composed a delightful collection of piano pieces for young pianist.

This children’s collection, *Ten Short Essays*, published in 1965, presents ten musical works where each piece captures a single emotion, idea, or thought. The subject matter/ titles are fitting for children. Some of these titles include, “Make Believe,” “Playing, Playing” and “So Gay.” The difficulty of these pieces fall between a Level Two and Level Four.

Most of these short pieces are not as technically challenging as Latour Sonatinas, which Jane Magrath lists as level three music, however, the pieces are much longer than any of the *Türk Pieces for Beginners*. Only one selection, “Playing, Playing” would be more appropriate for a Level Four student due to a very brief legato chordal passage in the right hand that would be challenging for most Level Three students to handle well.

The four pieces in this collection that will be discussed are, “Slumber Song,” “Make Believe,” “Two Voices,” and “March Song.” These three pieces give a great representation of the technical and musical challenges that this collection presents.

“Slumber Song”

This restful piece presents a beautiful legato melody played by the right hand while the left hand plays two note slurs which help contribute to the sense of drifting off to sleep. Towards the end of the piece, the left hand takes over the melody, now much quieter, while the right hand

¹³ Ibid.,143

plays the two note slurs. This piece is appropriate for a Level Two student. The hands never play together and the right hand plays a simple, sustained melody. This piece is a wonderful teaching tool to help develop the two note slur which is both a technical and musical challenge for many young students.

The two note slur is a common musical figure that occurs in many classical piano musical passages and recurs throughout the teaching literature at all levels. Beethoven's G Major Sonatina Ann 5, No. 1, a Level Three piece, is full of right hand two note slurs throughout the entire first movement. In the same manner, an advanced student who can successfully perform Beethoven's D minor Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 2, "Tempest," will again find challenging two note slur passages at the opening of the first movement. It is never too early for a young pianist to start developing the ear and understanding the arm, wrist, and hand gestures needed to correctly accomplish this challenge.

This piece is in F-sharp natural minor and the student can clearly hear the sense of the F-sharp tonic. The tonic however, does not sound as grounded without its leading tone. The seven measures before the penultimate measure no longer has a melodic line and even the dynamic scheme seems to disappear from a mezzo forte to a pianissimo. It is as if the music is moving deeper into a slumber and fading away. The final note, which is marked pianississimo, is a surprisingly a low C. Not only is the final note physically far away from the tonic middle F-sharp, it is tonally as far a way as possible as well.

(Figure 12 “Slumber Song” mm. 1-2)



(Figure 12a. mm 17-19)



“Two Voices”

“Two Voices” is a piece that is extremely similar to Bartok *Mikrokosmos* volume one No. 31. This *Mikrokosmos* selection challenges the student with learning how to play in a canon and can be found in level two of the Celebration Series. “Two Voices” also challenges the student to learn how to play canonically throughout the entirety of the piece. The right leads the canon for over half of the piece, then the left hand has its turn at beginning the canon.

(Figure 13. Mikrokosmos No. 31)



(Figure 14. “Two Voices”)



This piece is suitable for a Level Three student. Though Magrath and the Royal Conservatory place the *Mikrocomos* No. 31 Book 1 as a Level Two piece, “Two Voices” is not only more than twice as long as the Bartok, but also tonally more challenging to navigate because of the modal mixtures that Kay uses throughout this piece.

“Make Believe”

“Make Believe” is piece that brings forth the opportunity for a child’s imagination to guide the musical interpretation. This Level Three piece takes a journey from reality to fantasy or the *make believe* in a musical world. The student is challenged with voicing unison passage work between the hands, separated by an octave. Ulysses Kay presents this piece with no key signature, however, the first two four bar phrases tonicize G major. Kay brings out the fantastical world by briefly exploring exotic keys, alternating between the sharp side and flat side of the key spectrum. He explores keys like b minor, E flat major, E major, and C minor before returning to reality, the G tonic.

“March Song”

Many students enjoy performing Marches because of its steady, yet spirit-filled energy that the music possesses. Johann Sebastian Bach’s March in D Major from the *Anna Magdalena Notebook*, a level four piece, is a famous teaching piece in the piano repertoire. Magrath states, “The tuneful melody and the cheerful character makes this work a student favorite.”¹⁴

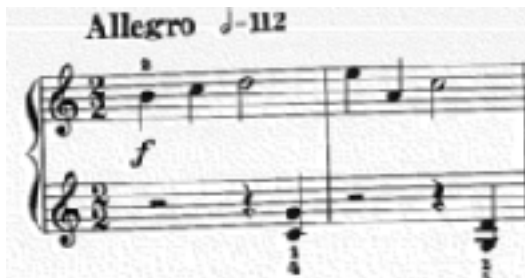
¹⁴ Magrath, *The Pianist Guide*, 6.

“March Song” presents the same energy and character as Bach’s March, but the left hand passage work is minimal compared to the Bach’s March. For a student who is not quite ready for as such counter point, this level three piece would be a wonderful prerequisite before entering into the *Anna Magdalena Notebook*.

“March Song” is written in a 2/2 time signature at a tempo of 112 equals the half note. This quick paced piece also asks the student to demonstrate a variety of articulations. This particular piece is quiet wonderful for building independency of the hands. Both the right hand and the left hand contribute to melody by having the left hand imitate the right hand after the first eight bar phrase. This type of work is prepares the student for two part inventions and helps guide the ear to listen to both hands equally and evenly.

Example of right hand lead then LH lead either at mm.11 and mm. 21.

(Figure 15a.) Right hand lead



(Figure 15b. Left hand lead)



Nine Little Piece by Philippa Schuyler

Philippa Schuyler (1931-1967) began concertizing as early as four years of age and performed across the country. She began composing music and at the ripe age of twelve years old, she her symphonic compositions performed by the New York Philharmonic, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.¹⁵ Apart from being a child piano prodigy, Schuyler had her own piano pieces published. It is unique to have children's piano music written by a child in the piano repertoire.

In 1938, Schuyler's mother, George Schuyler, helped her daughter publish *Nine Little Pieces*. These nine miniatures are brilliant, short, and at times, programmatic works. In this collection, pieces one through seven, and nine, fall between a Level Three and a level four. The eighth piece, "Song of the Machine" is more suitable for a Level Six student, due to the challenge of chordal jumps required in both hands.

These character pieces help the student to develop many technical skills while enjoying the challenge of capturing the spirit of these descriptive titles. "The Jolly Pig" and "At The Circus" will be the selected examples discussed. The scores to this collection can be located at the Special Collections Research Center at Syracuse University Library.

¹⁵ Walker-Hill *Piano Music by Black Composers*, 89.

“The Jolly Pig”

“The Jolly Pig” was composed when Schuyler was six years old. This spirited late Level Three/early Level Four piece in D Major allows the student to build their Alberti bass technique in both hands. This fundamental passage work is found at many different levels in piano studies and can be found as early as level three in the first movement of Latour’s Sonata No. 2 in G major.

(Figure 16. Latour Sonata No.2 in G Major mm1-2)



(Figure 17a.)

“The Jolly Pig” first measure



(Figure 17b.)

“The Jolly Pig” measure 11



The right hand of “The Jolly Pig” contributes to two note slurs, descending one octave scale passages, and an ascending one octave arpeggiated passage. This piece, in many ways is a compact etude, for the young pianist.

(Figure 17c.) Measure 6-7 “The Jolly Pig”



“At The Circus”

“At The Circus was composed when Schuyler was seven years old. This programmatic piece is reminiscent to Mussorgsky’s *Pictures At An Exhibition* where the music takes a journey through different scenes and a recurring musical passage is used to represent moving from one scene to the next. In “At The Circus,” the music portrays scenes one might find at the circus, while Mussorgsky’s *Pictures At An Exhibition* portrays musical illustrations of art work by Viktor Hartman.

Once a scene has been completed in “At The Circus,” Schuyler writes three grandiose G Major chords in both hands to signify that a particular scene is done and a new scene will begin. The G Major chords signifying the end of a scene is always in a 4/4 time signature despite the

time signature of the previous scene. The piece also begins with a one octave G Major scale flourish, followed by three G Major chords.

The first scene/ opening eight bar introduction has both hands playing in unison, an octave apart, and in the bass register of the piano. Each measure begins with an accented C or G major chord followed by staccato notes. The fourth beat in measures two, three, four and five have staccato notes on repeated Gs that are dotted eights joined to a sixteenth note. This quick rhythm, along with staccato notes, and down beat accents suggests a strong sense of excitement.

(Figure 18a. “At the Circus” mm. 2-3)



The second scene changes meter from 4/4 to 3/4 and presents an “oom-pah-pah” bass accompaniment figure. This bass passage work is an important skill for young students and can be found in many waltzes in the standard repertoire. If the student’s hand is large enough, the student should focus on hanging on to the first bass note, while the other fingers lightly touch the repeated chords.

(Figure 18b. mm 11-12)



The third scene, is another great teaching tool for students as it helps build a strong hand position by allowing the student to engage their wrist. The left hand in the final scene plays broken eighth notes fifths in different positions on the keyboard. The teacher should encourage the student to use wrist rotation in these passages so that the hand does not get fixed and tight.

(Figure 18c. mm 29-30)



The coda reverts back to the same musical material in the first scene and gets quieter, and quieter, disappearing on a staccato C major pianississimo chord.

Teachers and students can have a creative time exploring what is happening in each scene and bringing forth different musical interpretations to help depict where the child's imagination has taken them.

Five Sketches For The Piano by Noah Ryder

Noah Ryder (1914-1964) studied voice, composition, and piano. He was a graduate of Hampton Institute and University of Michigan. He enjoyed teaching piano and composed music for specific students that addressed technical and musical challenges. In *Five Sketches For The Piano*, Ryder writes:

“These five pieces were originally composed for some of my gifted students and are suitable for teaching purposes as well as concert performances.”¹⁶

“Poem,” published in 1945, is the first sketch, is a beautifully expressive Level Four piece. The other sketches in this collection are for advanced piano students. In “Poem,” the right hand is challenged with playing the melody while contributing to the accompaniment within one hand. The student is challenged with bringing out a sweet melody while keeping the accompaniment notes in the background. This voicing technique leads to great preparation for Bach fugues where a single hand will have to bring out a subject while still contributing to a counter subject. Ryder writes:

¹⁶ Noah Ryder. *Five Sketches for Piano*. New York: Handy Brothers Music, 1945.

“Here, the melody is played against a background which could be hummed. In Fact, it is as though a soloist were humming the melody to an accompaniment of a quartet.”¹⁷

With the right hand playing both the melody and part of the accompaniment, it requires the hand to span a ninth at time. This could be a challenge for students with smaller hands. Luckily, the student could break the span by allowing the left hand to take the lower note.

(Figure 19. “Poem” mm. 1-2)



“Poem” has a beautifully written melody that contains repeated notes. The student will be challenged to shape repeated notes in a parlando manner. This musical and technical challenge creates a foundation for later more advanced works like Chopin Nocturnes that require the same technique.

¹⁷ Noah Ryder. *Five Sketches for Piano*.

Intermediate Piano Pieces By Black Composers (Levels 5-7)

Once a student is able to perform music at approximately Level Five, the student has hopefully been exposed to many genres and styles of piano music. At this stage in their studies, students will have stronger opinions and preferences to the music that they enjoy studying. The intermediate levels present a large scope of music in the teaching literature. Sonatinas, Two-Part Inventions, easy Haydn Sonata movements, and the infamous, Beethoven *Für Elise* are all piano works within Levels Five to Level Seven in the teaching repertoire.¹⁸

Teachers often find that once a student reaches Level Five material, the individual personality and musical expressions of the student flourishes. Allowing students to study musical material that they relate to and enjoy is incredibly impactful at this stage in their studies. Including music by Black composers which also highlights music of Black culture during this stage broadens the spectrum of music that a student can relate to while also gaining pedagogical skills.

Five Animal Sketches by William Grant Still

William Grant Still (1895-1978) has been hailed as the “Dean of Afro-American Composers” due to his award winning career and ability to break many milestones and barriers for African American composers at the turn of the century. Still wrote several piano pieces for students at all levels. In an interview, Judith Still, William Grant Still’s daughter said that he had “a child’s like spirit” about him which makes this collection of piano works so special. In 1951,

¹⁸ Magrath, *The Pianist Guide* xi

Still wrote *Five Animal Sketches* which are not only didactic, but brings out the creative spirit of a child imitating the characteristics of different animals.

Under each animal title, Still writes a particular movement that the student should be trying to imitate both physically, and musically. The animals presented in this collection are “Camel” with *swaying movements*, “Bear” with *ursine clumsiness*, “Horse” with *galloping movements*, “Lamb” with *gamboling movements*, and “Elephant” with *heavy movements*. The pieces in this collection range from a level two (Lamb) to a level five (Elephant) and the collection in its entirety is suitable for a Level Five student. The two pieces that will be discussed are “Horse,” a level four piece, and “Elephant,” a Level Five piece.

Gustav Cornelius Gurlitt (1820-1901) was a romantic German composer who wrote many teaching pieces for young students. His *Album for the Young, Op. 140* is a staple in the teaching repertoire and largely represents level four music for the late beginner and early intermediate student. William Grant Still’s *Animal Sketches* would be a fruitful addition to the teaching repertoire for teachers who enjoy the pedagogical benefits from *Album for the Young, Op. 140*.

“Horse”

The third piece, “Horse” in the Still’s *Animal Sketches* is a fun study for students that would be a great piece in preparation for Gurlitt’s *Album for the Young No. 14 “Hunting Song,”* which is listed as a Level Five “and is more difficult than most pieces in this collection.”

“Horse,” also a piece in 6/8, captures the galloping spirit by having both hands play two note slurs that require both hands to lift out and “throw-away” each slur before beginning the next.

Luckily, this piece is much slower (100 = a dotted quarter) than “Hungting Song” (vivace) and the student can focus on the changing galloping intervals in the right hand since the left hand repeats the same notes.

(Figure 20. Gurlitt’s “Hunting Song” mm. 1-2)



(Figure 21. Still’s “Horse” mm. 1-2)



The B section of “Horse” presents a more tuneful repetitive motive in the left hand. The right hand sustains a single note, A, for several beats before jumping or galloping up to an eighth note chord, only to return to its sustained single note, A.

(Figure 21a.)



“Horse” presents the same technical challenges as “Hunting Song” but allows the student to focus on one hand at a time and at a slower tempo. This sets the ground work for the more technical challenge of the higher level, “Hunting Song” by Gurlitt.

“Elephant”

“Elephant” is a unique piece as it presents technical challenges that are suitable for a level four student, yet contains musical challenges that are more suitable for a Level Five student. This animated piece presents repeated note patterns, left hand chords, and right hand double third passage work. The thirds presented in this piece does not stay in the same hand position and requires the student to make shifts. The same technique is required in Gurlitt’s “Loss,” No. 16 from *Album for the Young* (Level 4). Burmuller’s “The Little Party” has scales in thirds which Jane Magrath lists as a Level Five piece. “Elephant” does not have “scalar” third passage work and is appropriately leveled as a four due to its technical challenges.

(Figure 22. Gurlitt “Loss” No. 16)



(Figure 23. Still's “Elephant” mm. 1-3)



Still's use of bitonality is why this piece is more suitable for a level five student. Many piano pedagogues use Milhaud's *A Child's Love* as part of their teaching repertoire. This collection by Milhaud is also highly chromatic and "requires an ear for dissonance."¹⁹ *A Child's Love* is listed as a Level Five piece in *The Pianist's Guide To Standard Teaching and*

¹⁹ Jane Magrath. *The Pianist Guide to Standard Teaching*.

Performance Literature. The dissonance of a piece should not be taken lightly and can be a challenging musical adjustment for young students.

“Elephant” is a wonderful early Level Five piece for a young student who would enjoy diving into portraying the heavy movements of a large animal like an elephant. This piece is also help the student build a solid hand position with the repeated chords in the left hand.

From the Southland, Piano Sketches by H.T. Burleigh

Henry Thacker Burleigh, or “Harry” Burleigh (1866-1949) was a composer and impactful figure in the African American music community during his lifetime. Burleigh made a career as a vocal performing baritone and arranger of Black American music. He is credited to exposing Czech composer, Antonín Dvorák, to spirituals.²⁰ Dvorák later included these type of melodies in his own compositions. Burleigh studied double bass at the National Conservatory of Music in New York where Dvorák was the director of the school. Burleigh worked as a janitor at the conservatory to earn income. As he worked, he sang spirituals which Dvorak heard. Burleigh writes, “I sang our negro songs to him very often, and before he wrote his own themes, he filled himself with the spirit of the old Spirituals.”²¹

The subject material for many of Burleigh’s musical works are on Black American culture. Apart from his arrangement of Spirituals, Burleigh wrote music to the poems by

²⁰ Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 284.

²¹ Jean Snyder, “A Great and Nobel School of Music: Dvorák, Harry T. Burleigh, and the African American Spiritual,” In John Tibbetts (ed) *Dvorák in America*. (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press,1993) 131

Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson and his wife, Louise Alston Burleigh. The six piano sketches in *From the Southland*, published in 1910, are all based on poems by his wife, Louise Alston Burleigh. These six poems: “Through Moanin’ Pines,” “The Frolic,” “In De Col’ Moonlight,” “A Jubilee,” “On Bended Knees,” and “A New Hidin’ Place,” captures a brief scene of Black culture in the south and are written in ebonics. The piano music depicts these scenes. This set was dedicated to his dear friend, Samuel Coleridge Taylor, another influential Black composer of the time.

The sketches from *From the Southland* represents music that is appropriate for Level Six students. The musical language in these sketches are tonal but have rich expressive and extended harmonies. Each sketch has a beautifully written melody that can easily be sung. It is obvious in these pieces that the composer was a vocalist and the student should use their own voice to help shape these melodic phrases. The two pieces in this set that will be further discussed are, “Through Moanin’ Pines” and “On Bended Knees”

“Through Moanin’ Pines”

“Along de desolate roads we pass Thro’

lonely pines and wither’d grass-

De win’ moans in de branches tall

An’ a heavy sadness broods o’er all!”

“Through Moanin’ Pines” is the first piece in this collection and the poem above is written before the music. The words “desolate,” “lonely” and “sadness” perpetuate the overall sense of despondency which is heard in the music. This piece is in an ABA form. The first phrase begins in f- sharp minor but briefly tonicizes A major. This dark key helps convey the sadness of the poem. The music begins with a single note melodic line in the right hand which is accompanied by left hand chords.

(Figure 24. Burleigh “Through the Moanin’ Pines” mm.1-4)



By the second phrase, the single note melody has turned into thirds and leads into the B Section. The B section has more movement now with left hand and right hand contributing to the accompaniment. The B section is in a clear four part harmonic texture. The thicker with richer harmonies depicting the heavier sadness “brood[ing] o’re all.” Even with the thicker texture, the students should be mindful of playing the inner notes much softer to allow the melody to sing through. The return of the A section has now been effected by the B section as the familiar melody has more harmonic support than its first iteration.

The student is asked to reach a span of an octave which is expected at this level. There is one instance when the student would have to play a broken chord at measure 22 in the left hand

because the right hand is not able to help contribute to the rest of the left hand chords as it would have previously done so. This chordal work and rich harmonies is similar to Chopin's Prelude in c minor which the Royal Conservatory Program also lists as a Level Six piece.

(Figure 25b. Burleigh mm. 21-22)



(Figure 26. Chopin Prelude in C minor Op. 28, No 20 mm. 5-6)



“On Bended Knee”

“Oh, I look away yonder- what do I see?

a band of angels after me.

Come to tote me away from de fiel's all green

‘Cause nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen.”

The fifth sketch, “On Bended Knee,” is another tunefully written piano piece in ABA form. The melody is stated by the left hand while the right hand creates a subtle background with repeated traits. The A section of the piece is written in 6/8 and in g minor. Though the mood is completely different, Burgmüller’s Ballade No. 15, Op. 100 is similar in that the left hand holds the melody, while the right hand plays repeated chords. The Ballade is written in 3/8 and in C minor. Jane Magrath lists Burgmüller’s *25 Progressive Pieces*, Op. 100 as music suitable for Level Six students.²² Students often have a harder time when a melody line is presented in the left hand because they have been use to the right hand being the melodious hand while the left hand is the accompaniment hand.

(Figure 27. Burleigh mm.1-2)



(Figure 28. Burgmüller Ballade)



²² Magrath, *The Pianist Guide*, xi.

The B section in “On Bended Knees” is in the parallel major, G major, and marked *religioso*. This section is reminiscent of a hymn. Careful voicing in both hands must be given to this religious section to allow it to sing while sound well balanced.

(Figure 29. “On Bended Knees”)



The return of the A section ends with a new section marked, *largamente* which concludes the piece in G major as if the prayer from the *religioso* section had been answered.

Adagio in F Minor by Chevalier de Saint-Georges

Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745-1799) was a virtuoso violinist, conductor, and composer. He was born in Guadeloupe to a wealthy plantation owner and one of his African slaves. His father took him to Paris, France when he was seven years old to further his education. He became a leading concertmaster in Paris, performing his own violin concerti and concerti that

was dedicated to him by other composers of the time.²³ Some of these composers include Antonio Lolli and Carl Stamitz. Chevalier de Saint-Georges composed operas, solo vocal, solo instrumental, chamber music and symphonies.

Adagio in f minor is a solemn expressive piece that would be a wonderful predecessor before the student enters into Clementi sonatinas. It is challenging for teachers to find music that bridges the gap between method book repertoire to sonatinas, as well as the gap between sonatinas to sonatas. *Adagio in f minor* perfectly fits into early Level Six music which is when a student would begin to study easy Clementi sonatinas according to Magrath. Natalie Hinderas gave the premiere of *Adagio in F minor for piano* 1977 and stated that this piece was deceptively hard due to its musical maturity. This piano piece in f minor expresses a melancholic melody with expressive harmonic support. The musical maturity needed for this piece is why it is more suitable for a Level Six student, though the technical challenges could be managed by a Level Five student.

The student is asked to perform scale passages in thirds in the right hand. As noted before when discussing William Grant Still's use of thirds in, "Elephant," consecutive double thirds are introduced in level five music. The thirds in *Adagio in f minor* are beautifully intertwined with the melody and should be voiced to the top note. A similar example of right hand thirds being used as the melody in the teaching repertoire is found in Czerny's Op. 139 no. 38 in G major.

²³ Jean Snyder, "A Great and Nobel School of Music: Dvorák, Harry T. Burleigh, and the African American Spiritual," In John Tibbetts (ed) *Dvorák in America*. (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1993) 131

(Figure 30. Adagio in f minor)

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piece in F minor. The first system consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The second system also features a treble and bass staff. The treble staff includes dynamic markings for *cresc.* (crescendo) and *dim.* (diminuendo). The bass staff in the second system shows a steady accompaniment with a consistent rhythmic pattern.

(Figure 31. Czerny Op. 139 No. 38 in G major)

The image shows a musical score for Czerny Op. 139 No. 38 in G major, marked *Allegro*. The score is written for piano and includes a treble and bass staff. The treble staff features a complex, rhythmic melody with many beamed notes and slurs. The bass staff provides a steady accompaniment with a consistent rhythmic pattern. The piece is in 3/4 time and ends with a double bar line.

Irene Britton Smith

Irene Britton Smith (1907-1999) had a heart for education, both for being an educator and continuously striving to gain access to more education to foster her own musical talents. Though she was primarily a public school reading teacher, she nurtured her own musical studies throughout her life which led her to studying with the most influential composition teachers of the twentieth century. Smith studied with Vittorio Giannini at The Juilliard School, Irvine Fine at Tanglewood Music School, and later studied with Nadia Boulanger at the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau, France²⁴. The teachers who helped nurture Britton's compositional style is a testament to her serious musical aptitude. The scores that will be discussed may be located at the Center of Black Music Research in Chicago, IL.

Meditation

Meditation is marked as "Large Ternary Form" in Smith's score. This piano solo was most likely used as a compositional exercise as it was located in her composition notebook that had many other pieces that had been submitted as "compositional exams." *Meditation* does not give any indication that this was submitted as an examination as there is no commentary written from an instructor as other pieces had done so in her notebook.

The A section in *Meditation* has a reflective and placid quality. This section, along with its closing, is quite similar in texture and in affect to the A section of Chopin's Nocturne Op. 48 no. 1 in C minor. Chopin Nocturnes are well known for their large dramatic and contrasting B sections, however Smith's B section in *Meditation* is more subdued than a Chopin Nocturne.

²⁴ Walker-Hill, *Piano Music by Black Women*, 96.

(Figure 32 Chopin Nocturne in C minor Op. 48 No. 1 mm. 1-4



(Figure 33. Smith's Meditation mm. 33-38)



The B section in *Meditation* does pick up momentum with running sixteenth notes in the left hand and presents shorter phrases in the right hand melodic line. Most Chopin Nocturnes are suitable for advanced students who are comfortably performing at a level nine and level ten. Without the large B section, and the absence of the technically challenging accompaniment left hand that many Chopin Nocturnes exhibit, *Meditation* would be appropriate for an early Level Seven student.

Sonatina

Sonatinas are a wonderful introduction to piano sonatas. These shorter works are more accessible, both technically and musically, while presenting the same compositional form. In Smith's one movement sonatina, each section of the piece is labeled (ie: first theme, bridge, second theme, closing theme, recapitulation, closing theme). There is no development section which is typical for sonatinas. This light hearted D Major sonatina has a single note melodic line in the right hand comprised of quarter and sixteenth notes. There are no technical demands that a level student would not be able to handle with the right hand alone. The left hand however, presents challenges for the student. Many sonatinas present Alberti bass work passages which

can be found in both Kuhlau and Diabelli sonatinas. Both Kuhlau and Diabelli sonatinas are referenced as Level Seven material for students by Magrath.²⁵

Smith's use of the Alberti passage work is more difficult than any of the sonatinas by Kuhlau or Diabelli. Most sonatinas present the Alberti figuration within the octave.

(Figure 34. Diabelli Sonata Op. 168 No. 1) Alberti bass within the hand (Level 7)



Smith however, goes beyond the octave in the left hand

(Figure 35. Smith Sonata)



²⁵ Magrath, *The Pianist Guide*, xi.

This is such an important technical skill to acquire and not many intermediate works address this issue. This leaves many students without much exposure to this technique which they will later encounter in advanced works such as Beethoven's Op. 90 piano sonata.

(Figure 36. Beethoven Op. 90 example)



Smith allows the right hand to be more simplistic than most sonatinas at this level. This allows the student to focus their attention on the left hand. Many student will want to open their hand and leave the fingers stretched out in anticipation of reaching the large intervals. This can leave the hand tight and will limit their ability to play in tempo. The student should practice rotating the wrist to allow for speedy fluency.

Two-Part Invention by Irene Britton Smith

Inventions are extremely beneficial master pieces that help the student learn how to gain independency of the hands. Bach's Two-Part Inventions and Three-Part Sinfonias are staples in the piano teaching repertoire for this very reason. Bach writes on the title page that when students study these pieces they will,

“learn to play cleanly in two parts, but also, after further progress, [be able] to handle three obligated parts correctly and well; and along with this not only to obtain good inventions (ideas) but to develop the same well; above all, however, to achieve a cantabile style in playing and at the same time a strong foretaste of composition.”

Not only will a student gain independency of the hands by studying inventions, Bach's hope was that above all, the student will learn to play in a singing manor. Many times both teachers and students forget that this music is suppose to sing which requires detailed study of phrase structures. Bach inventions are suitable for Level Seven through Nine students, or the late intermediate to early advanced student.

Smith's Two-Part Invention in G major has long running sixteenth notes in both hands. The student will be challenged with building a long phrase with many notes. The canonic passage work fits very well within the hands with good fingering. There are little coordination issues presented and no ornaments that could throw off the fluency of the hands. This invention is suitable for a level seven student.

(Figure 37) Bach Invention No. 2 in C minor in strict canon



(Figure 38) Irene Britton Smith Invention in G Major in strict canon



“Sunday” from *Harlem Suite* by Arthur Cunningham

Arthur Cunningham (1928-1997) was a prolific composer and inspiring teacher. Cunningham wrote over 140 compositions which included gaining a Pulitzer Prize nomination for his first commissioned orchestral piece, *Concentrics*.²⁶ He was considered a child prodigy and was especially gifted at improvising. His early signs of musical promise allowed him to study at the Metropolitan Music School in New York. He was a serious student and fully engaged in creating his art. His former student, Dr. John Ellis, recounts stories of Cunningham as a student at Fisk University and explained how while most college students his age would be out on Friday and Saturday nights, Cunningham would be in the practice rooms composing.²⁷

After graduating from the Metropolitan Music School, he was required to attend Fisk University despite his wanting to attend The Juilliard School of Music. This requirement was made by Langston Hughes who financially contributed to sponsoring his educational studies at the Metropolitan Music School of New York.²⁸ Having been brought up around a diverse population, the cultural shock of attending a historically black college was a racial struggle that impacted the rest of his life and music.

Cunningham explored both jazz and classical styles in his compositions. The duality of these two genres formulated a personal and musical identity struggle that he toiled with throughout his life. In *Harlem Suite* the title alone presents the duality of both jazz and classical

²⁶ Mark Clague, “Arthur Cunningham” In *International Dictionary of Black Composers* by Samuel A. Floyd, vol. 1, (Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999) 318-319.

²⁷ John Ellis, interviewed by Leah Claiborne, February 28th, 2018.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 318

idioms. Harlem is a place that is known for its rich African American culture, including jazz. A suite in classical music is a term used to describe a collection of pieces, most prevalent with the collection of dance movements in the Baroque era. Cunningham merges these two polar opposite nouns to describe a collection of piano character pieces that portrays the sights and sounds one would experience on each day of the week while walking through Harlem.

Cunningham writes:

“Places and days seem to be inseparable in Harlem. By naming the day, you name the place.

Occasionally, of course, where it’s at is where it is.”

The suite begins on Wednesday night at the “Apollo” then proceeds to Thursday “Lullabye for a Jazz Baby,” Friday “Sugar Hill,” Saturday, “Lenox,” Sunday “Convent,” Monday “Mornin’ side,” and Tuesday “Pataditas.”

Dr. John Ellis, former student of Arthur Cunningham, writes that "it was Cunningham’s wish for the whole suite to be performed together. Cunningham indicates this on a later version of this piece for orchestra and chorus.”²⁹ The suite as a whole is an advanced work for a level nine and ten student though there are some movements, such as Sunday “Convent,” that are not only more accessible, but also brings forth pedagogical benefits for the student. Sunday “Convent” is in two parts. The first is titled Sunday Morning “Collection Piece” and the second is titled Sunday Evening, “Peace.” Both parts are suitable for level seven and early eight students due to its rhythmic drive, musical language, and large chordal spans. The scores of Arthur

²⁹ John Ellis. interview by Leah Claiborne, February 28th, 2018.

Cunningham can be obtained by Cunningham's former student, Dr. John Ellis, Associate Professor of Piano/Piano Pedagogy at University of Michigan.

Sunday Mornin' "Collection Piece"

Cunningham writes:

"Sunday mornin' and church...what else is for the good folk? This is the kind of collection piece which was played right after the sermon when everybody was feeling good. It was gospel and it was happy."

(Figure 39) Cunningham's "Sunday Mornin'" mm. 1-10

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the piece "Sunday Mornin'" by Arthur Cunningham, measures 1-10. The score is written on two systems of staves. The first system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff begins with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 3/4 time signature. The tempo/mood is indicated as "gospel-joyously" and the dynamic as "sf". The notation includes quarter notes, eighth notes, and chords. The second system continues the piece with similar notation. The name "arthur cunningham" is written in the upper right corner of the first system.

This upbeat Level Seven “gospel” piece in 3/4 has rhythmic drive which incorporates accents on beat three and syncopation. Students who study music through the Royal Conservatory Music Program would have been exposed to jazz harmonies very similar to those that are present in “Collection Piece.” The use of seventh chords, modal mixtures, and rhythmic drive can be found in “River City Blues” by Martha Mier which is a Level Six etude in the Royal Conservatory Syllabus. At times, the leveling of the Royal Conservatory of Music is a grade lower than Magrath’s leveling due to the Royal Conservatory’s preparatory Levels A and B which function as Level One in Magrath’s leveling.

Cunningham is very descriptive in his score. He writes words like “easy” when describing how to play a relaxed grace note, and “dig” then “shout” when describing how to articulate repeated bass quarter notes. Other words he uses throughout the piece like, “mash” and “lean on it” makes this piece eventful and fun, much like the mood one would experience during offering at an African American church. There are a few instances where the chords in the right hand span over an octave and can not be redistributed between both hands. This will be a challenge for students with smaller hands.

Sunday Evenin’ “Peace”

Cunningham writes:

“In the evenin’ after prayer service the old folks would sit in the rockin’ chairs and be at peace with the Lord for havin’ brought them safely through another week.”

The steady “rockin chairs” can be felt in the consistent triplet figurations in the left hand.

(Figure 40) Cunningham's "Sunday Evenin'" mm 1-6

The student will be challenged with keeping these figurations quiet and even. The melody has a reflective and wondering quality to it. At first, the melody is stated in single notes, as if a single person is stating a memory (perhaps from earlier that week) and then the single voice is joined in by another (in thirds), agreeing and recounting the past week. This particular movement proves harder than appears with its changing meter and Cunningham's use of dissonances that are presented in the melody against the steady triplet figurations in the left hand.

Early Advanced Piano Pieces By Black Composers (Levels 8-10)

Once a student reaches Level Eight, they have gained sufficient technique and musical maturity to enter into early advanced repertoire. This repertoire includes some of the most performed literature including: Bach French Suites, Chopin Mazurkas and Nocturnes, Mendelssohn *Song Without Words*, and easy classical Sonatas.³⁰ If a student has reached Levels 8-10 in their piano studies, they have hopefully enjoyed several years of lessons and have gained a wider understanding of the large breadth of piano literature that is available to them. Among this wide scope of piano literature includes music for the early advanced student by Black composers. The music discussed in this chapter represents composers of the past as well as award winning composers under the age of thirty-five. It is vital that teachers not only look at music from the past for pedagogical inspiration, but also stay current with how music and piano pedagogy is being treated in the present day.

Nathaniel Dett

Robert Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) was a pianist, composer, and educator who paved the way for many Black composers who followed him. Though he was born in Canada, he spent most of his life in the United States. He was one of the first black composers to gain national recognition. Dett's music was performed at Carnegie Hall, Boston Symphony Hall and he became a member of the prestigious American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers³¹.

³⁰ Magrath, *The Pianist Guide*, xi.

³¹ Elaine Keillor, *Music in Canada, Capturing Landscape and diversity*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 1939). 190

During his life time, many composers across the world wrote music that expressed their nationalistic feelings and pride. Dett believed that among those nationalistic feelings included the voice and attitudes of Blacks in America. Dett enjoyed taking the negro melodies and other folk like songs and arranging them for choirs and for piano solo in the romantic style. Dett wrote six piano suites: Magnolia Suite for Piano (1912), In The Bottoms (1913), Enchantment (1922), Cinnamon Grove (1928), Tropic Winter (1938), and Eight Bible Vignettes (1943). His musical style is largely tonal and romantic through he began to break away from tonality in his later works which can be heard in movements of Eight Bible Vignettes.

Perhaps the only suite that is widely known and performed by most pianist is, *In The Bottoms*. The famous, Juba Dance, in this suite is a favorite of many pianist for its lively spirit and can be found in the Level Ten repertoire of the Royal Conservatory of Music's syllabus. Dett's lush romantic style coupled with his understanding of the instrument, makes all of his piano suites accessible for level eight-ten students. Many of his works are in the U.S. public domain and many of his piano works that are published after 1922 are still in the public domain in Canada and the European Union. The movements and pieces that will be discussed are, "Morning/Barcarole" from *In The Bottoms Suite*, "Adagio" from *Cinnamon Grove*, and "Father Abraham" from *Eight Bible Vignettes*.

"Morning/ Barcarolle" from *In The Bottoms Suite*

Much like Arthur Cunningham's *Harlem Suite*, Dett composes a character suite that highlights Black culture through music. In Harlem Suite, Cunningham began the suite on a Wednesday. Most people view Mondays as the beginning of a week, but in Harlem, or in Black

America, Wednesday nights at the Apollo was an exciting focal point of the week in Harlem. In the same way, Dett writes in the score:

“In the Bottoms is a Suite of five numbers giving pictures of moods or scenes particular to Negro life in the river bottoms of the Southern sections of North America...As it is quite possible to describe the traits, habits, and customs of a people without using vernacular, so is it similarly possible to musically portray racial peculiarities without the use of national tunes or folk songs, In the Bottoms then, belongs to that class of music known as “Program music” or music with a poetic basis.”³²

“Morning/Barcarolle”

Dett gives two titles for four out of the five movements in this suite. The titles represent a programmatic description as well as a traditional classical title. This fourth movement which is in ABA form depicts an early morning scene down by the river. This Barcarolle is characteristically in 6/8 meter and has a steady repeating left hand rhythm that portrays the oars continuously dipping into the river and gliding the boat forward. The right hand melody contains lilting rhythms followed by light sparkling scale passages.

³² Nathaniel Dett. In *The Bottoms Suite for Piano*. Chicago: Clayton F. Summy, 1913.

(Figure 41) Dett's "Morning" mm.1-7



Barcarolles are characteristically known to have double note passage work which portrays the lovers on the boat.

(Figure 42) Mendelssohn Song without words, Op 19 No. 6 "Venetian Boat Song" (Level 8)



In the B section of Dett's "Morning, the right hand must handle falling double note intervals in the high register of the keyboard as accompaniment figures then immediately play the melodic line in octaves in the middle range of the keyboard. This coordination and sudden change in character within one hand is a challenge for students. Often times, the last note of the melody line in the B section must be played by the left hand. This holds another challenge for the student to showcase their ability to hear long phrase lines, and match the tones of the phrase that has been built despite which hand is contributing to the melodic line. This movement is suitable for a Level Eight student and will help to develop light, brilliant scales while also helping to train the ear to build long melodic phrases.


"Father Abraham" from Eight Bible Vignettes

Eight Bible Vignettes is another highly programmatic piano suite by Dett. The first movement of this suite, Father Abraham shows two musical excerpts. One is listed as a 14th century Hebrew Song and then second is a Negro Spiritual. Both melodies, which are similar and set in f minor lift up songs of praise to Abraham who is a figure in both Jewish and Black culture that represents one who delivered his people out of bondage.

(Figure 43)


LEGEND:

14th CENTURY HEBREW



The God of Abra - ham praise, All praise - ed be His
Name, Who was, and is, and is to be, And' still the same!

NEGRO SPIRITUAL



Fa - ther A - bra - ham Sit - tin' be - side the 'Ho - ly Lamb
Way up on the moun - tain top; My Lord spoke and the char - iot 'stop!

Dett writes:

*“It is something more than a rare coincidence that Abraham, patriarch of Old Testament history, should also be apostrophized in the Negro spiritual; for the emotional and mystical keynote of the Negro, even as of the Jewish folksong, is emancipation and great happiness in some future state...In this piece, appropriately the first of this set Bible Vignettes, parts of both Jewish and Negro tunes are used and because of their similarity of mood and melody, it is hoped that their association will appear to be logical and natural.”*³³

Father Abraham is fruitful pedagogical study for early level ten students. The melody of the Hebrew song and the rhythm of the Spiritual are at times molded together, and other times,

³³ Nathaniel Dett. *Eight Bible Vignettes*. New York: Mills Music, 1943.

interrupt each other. This level ten piece allows the student to take on full range of the keyboard by playing melodic octaves in the high register then immediately playing rhythmically driven chords in the bass of the keyboard. Balancing the hands in extreme ranges of the instrument will be a challenge for the student. The driven, rhythmic, and forte chords are often interrupted by short, legato, and canonic passages. This highlights the new (negro spiritual with rhythmic variety) with the old (14th century Hebrew song in strict canonic passages).

(Figure 44) “Father Abraham” mm1-4

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Father Abraham" (measures 1-4). The score is written for piano and organ. The piano part consists of two staves: the upper staff is for the Right Hand (R.H.) and the lower staff is for the Left Hand (L.H.). The organ part also consists of two staves: the upper staff is for the Right Hand (R.H.) and the lower staff is for the Left Hand (L.H.). The tempo is marked "Molto Maestoso". The piano part features melodic lines with slurs and dynamic markings such as *f* and *mf*. The organ part features rhythmic chords with dynamic markings such as *f*. The score is in a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or F minor) and a 4/4 time signature.

The B section is beautifully written in a tuneful imitation. The student will want to shape each motive in each hand to build a cohesive larger phrase. As discussed with the inventions, this type of passage work greatly helps build the independency of the hands while training the ears and fingers to work closely together.

Rumpelstiltsken by Philippa Schuyler

Rumpelstiltsken is a popular fairytale that must have sparked Schuyler’s imagination and creativity. This piece was originally scored for orchestra but she later arranged it for piano solo. The original orchestra version was performed by the National Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall and was broadcast to Europe Europe by the U.S. state department in 1946.³⁴ As a piano arrangement, she toured with this piece “in the bizarre double role of composer and performer.”³⁵

Piano pedagogues often challenge their students to explore different textures and sounds on the piano. Often times, analogies to specific orchestral instruments will be made in order to engage the student’s mind and ear. Imitating different orchestral sounds at the piano challenges the pianist to broaden their musical color palette. The piano arrangement of “Rumpelstiltsken” should be performed with the orchestra in mind. Schuyler writes in the piano score which orchestral instruments she would have had used for particular passages in the music. This is a unique pedagogical benefit because the composer is very specific in what sounds she wanted the piano to imitate.

(Figure 45a) Example: Como Trompeta



³⁴ Kathryn Talalay, *Composition in Black and White: The Life of Philippa Schuyler*. Oxford University Press: 1997. 105

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 105

(Figure 45b) Example: Como Violini

The musical score for 'Como Violini' is presented in two systems. The first system features a tuba part on the left staff, marked *Sp Bassa*, and a string part on the right staff, marked *come Violini* and *mf quasi f*. The tuba part consists of a series of chords, while the strings play a melodic line. The second system continues the string part, marked *meno f* and *mp*, with the tuba part continuing below. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4.

(Figure 45c) Example: Como Fagot

The musical score for 'Como Fagot' is a single system. It features a bassoon part on the staff, marked *leggero* and *come Fagot*. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4. The bassoon part consists of a melodic line with some grace notes.

This Level Nine/Ten piece is in Rondo form. The A section requires strong fingers to play the relentless unison eighth note passages and chromatic scale passages in parallel motion. This section depicts the spinning of the sewing wheel weaving the straw into gold throughout the night.

(Figure 45d) Rumpelstiltsken Opening



The B section unfolds a gorgeous melody which is performed in different textures and registers of the piano. This section challenges the student to imitate the above orchestral instruments at the piano.

This Level Nine/Ten piece helps build the student's musical imagination and ability to produce different sounds at the piano with the guided decryption of orchestral instruments provided by the composer. The parallel motion finger work passages throughout the A section also helps build the student's technique.

Samuel Coleridge Taylor

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1911) was an Anglo-African composer, born in England and gained international recognition in his short life time. Coleridge-Taylor's 24-Negro Melodies were commissioned by the Oliver Ditson Company. They asked Coleridge Taylor to arrange an album of negro folk songs for the piano. The pieces were composed and published in 1905, shortly after to his first trip to America. Sixteen of the melodies are traditional African American melodies which he was exposed to by the Fisk Jubilee Singers who toured Europe. The other eight melodies are traditional folk tunes.

In keyboard literature the number twenty-four is quite significant. The preludes and fugues by Johann Sebastian Bach are set in two books, each containing twenty-four preludes and has become a staple in both the teaching and performance repertoire. Later, other composers such as Chopin and Scriabin also composed twenty-four which richly added to the piano literature. Coleridge-Taylor made a profound statement in making his mark in keyboard music by creating a body of work that opens a door into African and African American experience. The melodies in this collection are pure, honest, and powerfully moving. Each piece in this collection states the melody simply, thereafter, Coleridge-Taylor takes the melody and adds embellishments and varies the texture. The student will gain understanding on how to treat various textures and ornamentations of the theme while being challenged with the expression of the musical maturity that these melodies require. The pieces in this collection represent music that is appropriate for Level Nine and Level Ten students.

“Wade In The Water”

“Wade in the water” is a popular spiritual that can be found in many hymnals today. The verses of this song reference the book of Exodus in chapter fourteen when the Israelites would escape the harsh slavery in Egypt. The chorus references the new testament in the book of John 5:4, “For an angle went down at a certain season into the pool and stirred up the water: whoever then first, after the stirring of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted. It was believed that whoever stepped into the pool would be healed of any and all ailments. In the same fugitive slaves would emerge themselves in the water if they were being followed by slave owners and their hunting dogs. The water would help mask their scent so that the hounds could not find them.

This level ten spiritual builds momentum by adding lush textures, harmonies, and melodic chords as the piece unfolds. The student is asked to perform octave passages that fit well in the hands. Another challenge with this piece, along with all the spirituals in this collection, is voicing the melody even while the accompaniment figure is within the same hand. The climax of this presents the melody one final time with syncopated full chords in both hands. In order for the music to not sound so heavy and bombastic, the student will be challenged with voicing both hands. Students will not only be exposed to beautifully written melodies, but will also enjoy studying the historical context on how this music emerged out of a dark time in American history.

(Figure 46a) Ending of “Wade in the Water”

This musical score shows the ending of the piece "Wade in the Water". It consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system features a treble clef staff with a melodic line marked *a tempo* and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment marked *cresc.*. The second system continues the accompaniment, with the treble clef staff marked *resarcite* and the bass clef staff marked *ff roll.*. The piece concludes with a final chord in the bass clef staff.

(Figure 46b) “Wade in the Water” melody and accompaniment in one hand

This musical score shows the melody and accompaniment for "Wade in the Water" arranged for one hand. It consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system features a bass clef staff with a melodic line marked *p* and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system continues the accompaniment, with the treble clef staff marked *p* and the bass clef staff marked *p*. The piece concludes with a final chord in the bass clef staff.

Carlos Simon

Carlos Simon (1986-) is versatile composer and arranger that combines the influences of jazz, gospel, and neo-romanticism in his works. In 2015, Simon won the Underwood Emerging Composer Commission from the American Composers Orchestra. Here, his orchestral work *Portraits of a Queen*, was performed by the American Composers Orchestra at Symphony Space in New York City. Apart from orchestral writing, Simon also enjoys scoring music for film. In 2015, Simon was the winner of the prestigious Marvin Hamlisch Film Scoring Award.

Simon served as music director and keyboardist for GRAMMY Award winner Jennifer Holliday. He also toured internationally with soul Grammy nominated artist, Angie Stone, where he performed throughout Europe, Africa and Asia. Simon graduated with his Doctorate of Musical Arts degree in composition from the University of Michigan in 2017 and currently serves on the music faculty at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia.

Entheus

Entheus is a piano composition that was first written in 2009 and then later revised in 2018. The term “entheus” is defined as “divinely inspired.” The composer translates this meaning as “evoking God within.” This awakening of a deity could mean various things for different people. For Simon, this piece was inspired by breaking away from the boundaries and rules that he felt studying composition in a western European academic setting put on him. Simon studied piano and composition at Morehouse College, and later earned his Masters of Music degree in composition at Georgia State University.

When asked if this piece reflects any aspect of his life as a Black composers he says:

“Inadvertently it does. Yes. As a Black composer I studied music in a Western European academic way. You study to understand the rules, then you demonstrate that you can write by following the rules. All of this began to feel like there were so many boundaries and restrictions- we put these restrictions on ourselves. I call it paralysis through analysis. This piece represents the freedom of breaking away from those boundaries. I didn’t completely abandon it-but, this freedom, it was liberating.”³⁶

Simon’s use of extended harmonies and “free rhythm” represents breaking away from the boundaries he felt were put on his compositional style. In *Entheus*, the meters are constantly changing.

When asked about the changing meters, Simon explains that there is no meter in a strict form. The time signatures are a way to group ideas and to show where the phrases end. This idea of free form with meter is much like Mompou’s approach where he often writes music without a time signature and uses baronies as a mean to give the piece structure.

³⁶ Carlos Simon. interviewed by Leah Claiborne February 15th, 2018.

(Figure 47) Example of Mompou Scenes d'enfants "Cris Dans La Rue" opening phrases:



(Figure 49) Changing Time Signatures in Entheus mm 1-6



Though this piece may appear to be challenging musically, Simons use of the changing time signature makes it obvious for the student to understand the group of ideas along with the beginning and ending of phrases. There is freedom for interpretation within the given parameters. Simon's use of extended harmonies creates dissonance though the piece is still largely tonal. Due to the musical maturity needed to produce a well thought out interpretation, this piece is suitable for a Level Nine student.

Thomas Wiggins "Blind Tom"

Thomas Wiggins Bethune (1849-1908) was born as Wiley Edward Jones, but when he and his parents were sold, he was renamed Thomas Wiggins by the new plantation owner. Thomas Wiggins was born blind and the plantation owners could not make much use to him because of his disability. They allowed Wiggins to roam around the plantation as a child. It was through his wandering when he heard the daughters of the plantation owners playing the piano. Wiggins began to create melodies by ear and by age five was actively composing at the piano.

Wiggin's plantation owner recognized his incredible talents and knew that money could be made by having him perform in public. Wiggin's toured the country earning an estimated \$100,000 a year.³⁷ His promoter advertised him as an inhumane creature turned artist, in a freak-

³⁷ Evelyn Brooks. *African American Lives*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 85.

show style fashion. Wiggins talents brought him to the White House where he performed for president Buchanan and also toured throughout Europe.

Water in the Moonlight

Water in the Moonlight, published in 1866, is a delightful waltz with a simple tuneful melody in B flat major. The second half of the first beat has a triplet figure that emulates the sound of water.

(Figure 50a) Example of triplet figure



This triplet figure eventually transforms into thirty second note flourishes. These ornamental flourishes increasing become more demanding by leaping up two octaves before returning to the melody.

(Figure 50b) Example of thirty second note flourishes: measure 36



Though these flourishes fit well in the hand, the student will primarily be challenged with handling the leaps. Students often over anticipate large leaps by quickly throwing their hand to the higher register without preparing the sound they wish to achieve. This piece is a great predecessor to Chopin waltzes which are largely graded as Level Nine and Level ten material. *Water in the Moonlight* is suitable for Level Eight students.

B.E. Boykin

Brittany E. Boykin (1989-) began studying piano at seven years old. She was a serious student competing in many piano competitions. Her devotion to piano lead her to Spelman College where she was the pianist for the glee club throughout her tenure. While at Spelman College, she began to become more interested in composition where was encouraged to pursue her compositional talents. During her undergraduate years, Boykin's compositions were recorded by the Spelman Glee Club. Her compositional pursuit continued into her graduate work at Westminster Choir College. While at Westminster Choir College, she was awarded with the R.

and R. Young Composition Prize. Most recently, she was also a prize winner in the George Shirley's African Art Song Composition Prize.

Boykin completed her M.M. degree in sacred music with a concentration in choral studies and is currently earning her doctorate at Georgia State University.

Invictus Fantasy:

Invictus is a brilliant fantasy that showcases the technical ability of the student pianist. This work demands various technical challenges including extensive left hand arpeggios, parallel chromatic scales, and octave passage work. The dedicatee of this piece was Boykin's piano teacher and mentor who encouraged her musical pursuits early on in her piano studies.

Invictus is Latin for, "unconquered" and the composer writes that this description is most appropriate for describing her former teacher, Alma Sanford. Boykin writes, "This piece is a musical portrait of a woman who has shaped my identity."

The piece begins with a simple single note melody in the right hand in the unique key of A flat minor. The left hand supports the melody with repeating triads. The melody is then repeated in right hand octaves.

(Figure 51a) Example of opening measures:



The second section of this fantasy is a great study for left hand arpeggiated work. The melody remains in single notes while the left hand performs two octave arpeggiated passages in C-sharp minor, another dark key.

(Figure 51b) Example of left hand arpeggios mm. 24-25



While remaining in C-sharp minor, the right hand is challenged with jumping octave work passages. According to the Royal Conservatory of Music curriculum, a student at level nine and level ten is required to be able to demonstrate solid and broken octave work

within two octaves. Octave work with leaps, is far more challenging than scalar passage work. This brief demanding section moves this piece from a Level Nine, to a Level Ten.

(Figure 51c) Example of leaping octaves measure 71



The piece ends back in A Flat minor with the once single note melody, returning in full chords in the right hand.

Charles-Lucien Lambert

Charles Lambert (1828-1896), an accomplished pianist and composer, was born as a free black in New Orleans. He grew up performing piano and playing in the Théâtre d'Orléands. His musical talents took him to Paris, France where the majority of his piano compositions were published. Lambert had an extensively successful career in Paris, France as composer. The International Dictionary of Black Composers lists nearly forty published solo piano compositions by Charles-Luncien Lambert.³⁸ The majority of Charles-Lucien's piano pieces are dance pieces. Among these dances are, Mazurkas, Waltzes, Polkas, and Boleros. Lambert enjoyed the music of Chopin and especially his treatment of dances.

Lambert left France in in the late 1860s and moved to Brazil. While in Brazil he opened a music store where he taught piano. Among his students were Ernesto Nazareth who also became a well known pianist and composer. Nazareth is credited as being one of the first Brazilian composers to combine, "African-Brazillian rhythms into European genres such as waltzes, polkas, and marches."³⁹ Nazareth's celebrated style influenced other composers such as Heitor Villa-Lobos and Darius Milhaud. Nazareth's compositional style undoubtedly was influences by his teacher, Charles Lambert.

³⁸ Ann Sears. "Charles-Lucien Lambert" *International Dictionary of Black Composers*, 703.

³⁹ Kevin Painting. "Ernesto Nazareth and the Incarnation of the Brazilian Soul." Primephonic, 16 Aug. 2016, www.primephonic.com/.

Au Clair De La Lune: Variations and Final

Au clair de la lune: Variations et final is a theme and variation on the 18 century folk tune, “By the Light of the Moon.” There is an introduction, theme, three variations and a finale in this composition. Each variation highlights a specific technical challenge which was a common format in classical piano variations.

The introduction presents the theme in double octaves and in dotted rhythms. The theme remains in octaves with the right hand while the left hand gives more harmonic support with broken chords.

(Figure 52) Example of Intro and Theme

The image displays three staves of musical notation for the introduction and theme of 'Au Clair de la Lune'. The top staff is labeled 'Maestoso.' and 'INTRADA.' and features a melody in double octaves with dotted rhythms. The middle staff continues the introduction with broken chords in the left hand and includes markings for 'Ped.', 'dimin.', and 'coll.'. The bottom staff is labeled 'Moderato.' and 'THÈME.' and shows the main theme in octaves with broken chords in the left hand, including markings for 'Ped. P.', 'Ped.', and 'Ped. less.'.

The first variation has running sixteenth note passage work while the left hand crosses over the right hand to play B-flat and E-flat, the tonic and dominant notes. The fifth finger of the right hand holds the melodic note. The challenge this variation will be for the student to bring out the single melodic note in the right hand while keeping the other sixteenth notes quiet. When hands cross over such as this variation, there is a tendency to bring out the notes that are being played at the cross over. The left hand notes do not hold the melody, so the student will want to strive to keep these notes softer as well.

(Figure 53) Example of Variation 1



The second variation presents repeated intervals of fifths in thirds in both hands. The student will want to aim to keep their wrists loose so that the hand does not become tight and locked into one position.

(Figure 54) Example of Variation 2



The third variation presents octave scales in the left hand with chords in the right hand. This variation moves from E-flat major to C major. In this C major section, the right hand plays three octave arpeggiated passage work.

(Figure 55) Example of Variation 3



Finale

The brilliant finale returns to E-flat major and combines the technical and musical elements that were displayed in the introduction and variations in an impressive bombastic manner. This advanced Level Ten piece presents small etudes in each variation. Once these skills are mastered, the student will enjoy performing this crowd pleasing piece.

Amanda Ira Aldridge (Montague Ring)

Amanda Ira Aldridge (1866-1965) was an accomplished singer, composer, and teacher. She was born in England to a highly successful musical family. Both of her parents were singers. Her sister was an contralto who performed at the Royal Opera House. Her brother was a conductor and composers. Aldridge took voice and counterpoint classes at the Royal Conservatory of Music. In her teens, she began performing publicly and had a successful singing career. Unfortunately, Aldridge demanded her voice when she was diagnosed with laryngitis. This illness halted her public performing career. Without the ability to sing, Aldridge changed her name to Montague Ring and turned to composing and teaching.⁴⁰ She wrote music for concert bands, piano, and solo voice and was also Marian Anderson's voice teacher.

Aldridge wrote over a dozen solo piano works, seven of which are piano suites. These suites include, *Bagdad Suite*, *Carnival Suite of Five Dances*, *Four Moorish Pictures: An Eastern Suite*, *T'Chaka: African Suite*, *Three Arabian Dances* *Three African Dances*, and *Three Pictures from Syria*. The suites that will be further discussed are *The Carnival Suite* and *Bagdad Suite*.

⁴⁰ Walker-Hill *Piano Music by Black Women Composers*, 16.

Most of Aldridge's suites are taken from African subject matter. Her mother encouraged her to compose on African and Arabian materials in honor of her African American father who died before she was two years old.

Carnival Suite in Five Dances

Carnival Suite in Five Dances, published in 1924, is the only piano suite that Aldridge writes that is not based on African subject matter. Although the musicality may not be as demanding as the other Suites, *Carnival Suite* is perhaps one of the more technically challenging piano suites that Aldridge writes. This suite is suitable for a Level Nine student.

The first movement, "Cavalcade" is an energetic fanfare and march in 2/4 meter. This level nine movement requires quick right hand chordal work which must be voiced to the top in order to bring out the melody. The left hand has accents on the down beat but must not weigh down the right hand which is prominent.

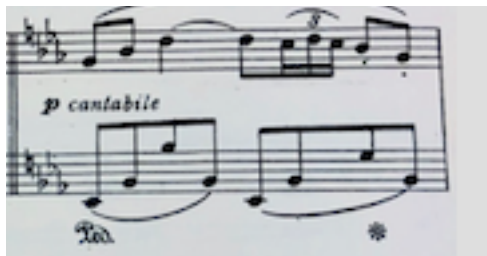
(Figure 56) "Cavalcade"



The second movement, “Pierrette,” is light hearted and airy. The left hand in this movement is the most challenging as the left hand requires large staccato jumps which can be challenging to navigate for students. This movement is suitable for a level eight/nine student.

The third movement, “Harlequin” is suitable for a level seven student. This movement is in ternary form. The right hand has a sprightly melody with running sixteenth and staccato eighth notes. The B section is marked *cantabile*. The left hand in this section presents broken chord section extends over the octave much like Chopin Nocturnes. This movement would be a great predecessor to a Chopin Nocturne due to the short length of the left hand broken chord passage work that extends over the octave.

(Figure 57) “Harlequin”



The fourth movement, “Columbine” is a graceful waltz and is the easiest movement in the collection. “Columbine” is suitable for a level six student. The right hand presents a melody in thirds with a brief cadenza in the middle before returning to the main material.

The final movement, “Frolic” is the most challenging movement of the suit and is suitable for a Level Ten student. The final movement alternates between F and D flat major. The

right hand performs triplet patterns that increasingly becomes more demanding as the piece unfolds. The triplets begin as single notes, then become accompanied by octaves, chords and sixths. The left hand also becomes more challenging as the movement progresses. The left hand begins with staccato single note eighth notes that fits in the hand. The intervals between each note begins to enlarge making the jumps more difficult for the student. The left hand soon adds chords and octaves to the jumps.

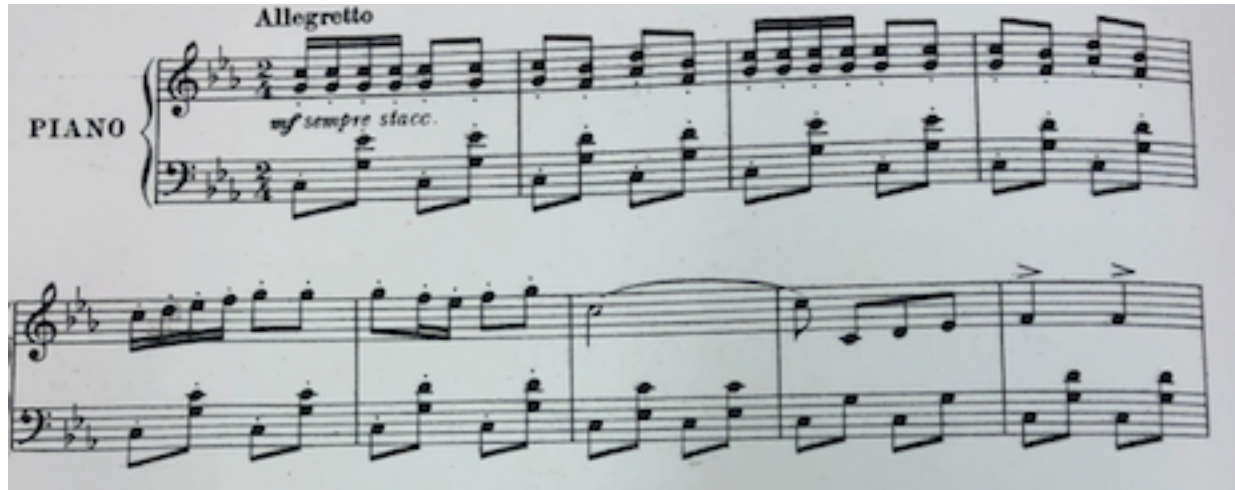
Bagdad Suite

Bagdad Suite, published in 1929, is one of Aldridge's most accessible piano suites and is a wonderful piece for the early advanced student. The suite has three movements and is suitable for Level Eight students. Each movement is highly modal which gives the music an exotic atmosphere.

This particular suite, along with *Three African Dances*, *Three Pictures from Syria*, and *Three Arabian Dances* were all later orchestrated by Henry Marcellus Higgs.

The piece begins with "The Royal Guard." This militant movement has repeated fourths and the left hand eighth notes contribute to the march like feel of this movement. The left hand remains largely unchanged throughout the movement while the right hand adds three note chords in the same rhythmic patterns and melody. The student should focus on retaining a light staccato touch through the entirety of the piece. This movement is suitable for Level Seven students.

(Figure 58) “The Royal Guard”



The second movement, “The Garden Beautiful,” begins with a colorful melody. Aldridge’s use of modal mixture and chromaticism within the melody brings an forth a foreign atmosphere to the music.

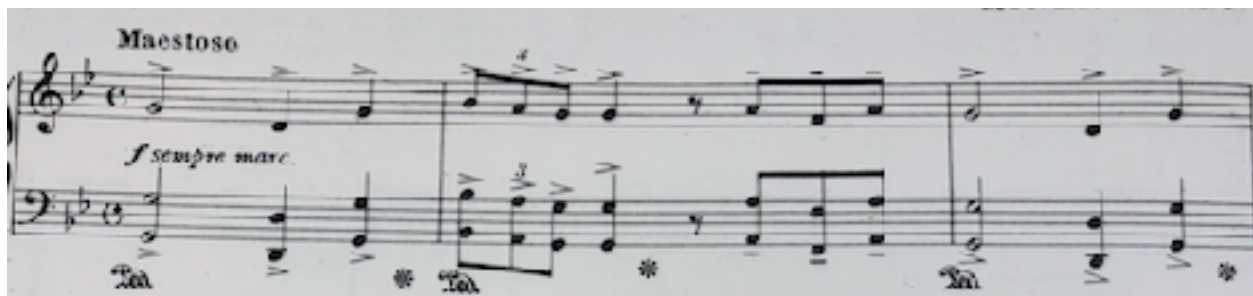
(Figure 59) “The Garden Beautiful”



Again, the left hand texture largely goes unchanged through the entirety of this movement while the right hand has a cantabile melody that is ornamented. This movement is suitable for Level Six students.

The third and final movement, “Hail! Hail! O Caliph the Great!” is a triumphant ending to this suite. Caliph was the spiritual and civil leader of Baghdad. This movement is the most technically challenging movement as it highlights double octave work. The double octaves in this piece are scalar without containing large jumps which makes the octave passages more manageable for students. This movement is suitable for Level Nine students.

(Figure 60) “Hail! Hail! O Caliph the Great!”



There are multiple piano pieces for students to study in the advanced levels. While still gaining technical proficiency and honing in on discovering their unique musical voice, both student and teachers will find the advanced music by Black composers to be beneficial in incorporating into the teaching repertoire.

PART THREE

CONCLUSION

There are numerous piano solo pieces by Black composers that can be incorporated into every grade level of piano teaching repertoire. The pieces discussed highlight the technical and musical challenges that can help students gain proficiency in their piano playing while simultaneously erasing the stigmatism that classical music was only written by European, White, males. By eliminating this stigma and diversifying the teaching literature, there is greater potential in diversifying and broadening the demographic of students wanting to studying classical piano music.

The compositions that pedagogues select in their teaching gives weight to the importance of that music in the piano field. If teachers are not given the resources needed to teach a more diverse scope of literature, the music of these great African American composers will remain unheard and unappreciated. It is vital in the field of classical piano music for there to be more inclusion and representation of piano music by Black composers. By doing so, these pedagogically fruitful pieces will begin to take their rightful place in piano studios, schools of music, and the public concert stage.

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