

Four Characteristic Pieces for piano, four hands; op. 30

The opening number "Jenny and Anna" was a *jeu d'esprit* I had on February 4th of last year, in which the two sister piano students would share the instrument and portray one another musically. Taking the primo part is Anna, who presents first a depiction of her younger, more capricious sister with a wry waltz tune in a dotted rhythm. Jenny on secondo furnishes her theme with a rudimentary accompaniment which manages nevertheless to take us far afield harmonically. Now it's her turn to exaggerate, as Jenny represents her own sister with a stern, syncopated theme in the parallel minor. Those frivolous oom-pah-pahs are duly suppressed, although Anna does keep the dotted rhythm of Jenny's little waltz active in the treble accompaniment. Finally her theme for Jenny returns outright in the primo, but this time through the subject down there on secondo harmonizes it much more conventionally, a clear token of her elder sister's good influence. Since the piece was dedicated to the girls' mother, my friend the literary agent Ginger Barber, I presented it first to her. She glanced at the score and said to my delight, "That must be Jenny where the flat comes in." Quite so.

I had kept both parts of "Jenny and Anna" easy enough for students to play, but in July of last year I seized particularly upon the fact that this piece had an easy secondo part. In my four-hands Suite, op. 9, the primo part is for the student and the secondo for the teacher. I decided that here the roles would reverse: as I continued work on the present suite, the secondo part would stay easy, but I had the freedom to write more challenging music for the primo to play.

The Serenade is written in the characteristic guitar key of E major. While the primo sings, the secondo strums off-beat chords in the first strain. For the second one, it replicates the finger picking of idiomatic repeated notes through the use of broken octaves (the more grateful way to achieve this effect on keyboard instruments). After undergoing a certain amount of development, this second strain recurs as a canon, which supports a street echo effect: the secondo player holds down the pedal, and the primo executes the canon at the space of only an eighth note between the hands. Above the street, up in her balcony, the subject of the serenade hears a piquant blurring effected by both acoustical (the sustaining pedal) and compositional (the abnormally close canon) means. The first strain returns and builds now to its own climax. We sense the propriety in just continuing our stroll (which had suffered this sweet interruption) down the Italian street, and letting the lovers be. As we move further along our appointed path, the strumming guitar appears to die away. I dedicated Serenade to my sister Rose.

In writing these notes I find myself at an impasse here: if I am pointing up the music's highlights for the listener, then I should talk now about the third number, "The Chase." But I just composed that a few weeks ago, whereas the final number, "Impatience," was written in September of *last* year. The latter number begins quietly, but ends raucously when the student on secondo takes over and

puts the number into high gear, as I describe below. I was happy with "Impatience" as a characteristic piece, just not one to immediately follow the Serenade with its *morendo* ending. During the intervening year, I played the wedding for Rose and Bill Cupo, and thought it would be appropriate to interlard a characteristic piece dedicated to him. "The Chase," fortunately, starts out fast (a perfect foil then to Rose's Serenade), and its coiled-up energy in fact never lets up until the very end (a foil then to the beginning of "Impatience" as well).

The kind of headlong 6/8 characteristic of "The Chase" has long been associated with the hunt, but here the quarry is Charlie Chaplin! I noticed in his films that outdoor scenes where the police are in pursuit were often looped for comic effect (and also possibly as an economy: a way to get your money's worth out of your footage). You would see Charlie go around the same corner, and the same gang of hapless police continue down the same street without turning; that kind of thing. I wrote my music in large formal sections which get repeated verbatim along with the film footage. Toward the end the eighth-note motion allays: Charlie seems to have eluded them. But it picks up again when he is spotted, and he is of course nabbed in the end.

The "Impatience" of the final number is characteristic of many beginning students of piano, including my niece Lara, to whom the work is dedicated. In writing this number I decided to take their point of view, being bored with playing naïve accompaniments while the teacher playing primo fairly goes to town. The latter starts things out with a slow four-note ostinato, repeated relentlessly twenty-four times. Below this, the student on secondo plays groups of fourths, which use only four different pitches in both hands. Then, against this background, our teacher gets to play certain rambling, but at least varied, improvisatory motifs with his right hand. Finally the student can no longer take the relentless repetition in her part, for so much as a single measure more! She takes the fourths she has been relegated and generates a new motive, presto, in which she of course becomes the soloist. This goes fine until she invites the teacher on primo to take over with the number's original melody. The problem is, she expects him to recapitulate this material at the break-neck speed that she has since established. For her part, she no longer seems to mind those repeated fourths which proved so very irksome before, as long as the music stays really fast like this! The teacher tries valiantly to comply with her wishes, to speed up his own part from the number's stately, not to say static, introduction. This music, however, soon proves itself unsuited to the faster tempo which now obtains. The poor pedagogue gets lost, dropping out for measures at a time, while those student fourths continue whirring blithely below! The embarrassed teacher (me, of course) and his reckless student (me again at Lara's age) only come together again in the piece's final, *sforzando* chord.

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Four Characteristic Pieces

for piano, four hands; op. 30

1. Jenny and Anna

Victor Frost

♩. = 56 *8^{va}*-----

Primo

Secondo

f *dim.* *mp*

8^{va}-----

6

mf *mf*

12 *(8va)*

f

f

17

dim. *mf*

dim. *mp*

23 *8va*

ff

ff

30 *(8va)*

f *ff*

f *ff*

37 *(8va)*

(8va)

(8va)

43

mf, dim. *mp*

mf, dim. *mp*

(8va)

50

mf, dim. *mp*

(8va)

57

mf, dim. *mp*

5
3

64

ff

ff

to Virginia Barber

2. Serenade

$\text{♩} = 60$

72

p dolce

pp

76

mf *mp* *f*

cresc. *mp* *p* *mf*

80

mp *f*

p *mf*

84

p

dim. *pp*

5

89

cresc. mf dim. p

cresc. mf dim.

93

p cresc. mf dim.

cresc. mf

96

dim. p

99

mp *cresc.* *f*

1 2 1

mp *cresc.* *f*

5 4 3 2 1

102

mp *cresc.* *ff* 8^{va}

cresc.

105

8^{va}

mp *ff* *pp*

4 3 4 3

ff

pp

4 3

ped.

109

4 3

1 2

112

4 3

8^{va}

1 2

1 3 1 2

3

5 1

5 4

4

p dolce

(8^{va})

116

p *mf*

pp, cresc. *mp*

119

mp *f*

p *mf*

123

mp *f*

p *mf*

8va

(8va)

127

cresc.

cresc.

(8va)-----

131

fff *f* *mf*

ff *f* *mf*

(8va)-----

135

p *p* *dim.* *ppp*

3. The Chase

140 $\text{♩} = 148$

p (*p*)

145

cresc.

151

cresc.

157

ff

ff

162

dim.

dim.

167

dim.

dim.

173

p

p

This system contains measures 173 through 178. It features a grand staff with three staves. The top staff has a treble clef and contains six measures of music with eighth-note patterns and slurs. The middle staff has a treble clef and contains six measures of music with eighth-note patterns and slurs. The bottom staff has a bass clef and contains six measures of music with eighth-note patterns. The first measure of the top and middle staves is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

179

rf *p*

rf *p*

This system contains measures 179 through 184. It features a grand staff with three staves. The top staff has a treble clef and contains six measures of music with eighth-note patterns and slurs. The middle staff has a treble clef and contains six measures of music with eighth-note patterns and slurs. The bottom staff has a bass clef and contains six measures of music with eighth-note patterns. The first measure of the top and middle staves is marked with a *rf* dynamic, and the second measure is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

185

rf *cresc.*

rf *cresc.*

This system contains measures 185 through 190. It features a grand staff with three staves. The top staff has a treble clef and contains six measures of music with eighth-note patterns and slurs. The middle staff has a treble clef and contains six measures of music with eighth-note patterns and slurs. The bottom staff has a bass clef and contains six measures of music with eighth-note patterns. The first measure of the top and middle staves is marked with a *rf* dynamic, and the second measure is marked with a *cresc.* dynamic.

190

rf

rf

195

rf

rf

200

ff

ff

205

Musical score for measures 205-210. The score is written for piano in a 4/4 time signature. It consists of four staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. The melody is primarily in the upper treble clef, featuring eighth and sixteenth notes with various accidentals (sharps and naturals). The bass clef parts provide harmonic support with chords and a steady eighth-note bass line. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

210

Musical score for measures 210-215. The score continues from the previous system. It features the same four-staff layout. The melody in the upper treble clef shows a change in dynamics, marked with *dim.* (diminuendo) starting in measure 213. The bass clef parts continue with their respective harmonic and rhythmic patterns. The piece ends with a double bar line.

215

Musical score for measures 215-220. The score continues from the previous system. It features the same four-staff layout. The melody in the upper treble clef begins with a flat (b) and includes a first ending bracket with a '1' below it. The bass clef parts continue with their respective harmonic and rhythmic patterns. The piece ends with a double bar line.

220

Musical score for measures 220-227. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems of staves. The first system includes a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass staff. The grand staff has a *p* dynamic marking. The music features a melodic line in the right hand with slurs and a bass line with chords and a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand.

228

Musical score for measures 228-234. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems of staves. The grand staff has a *p* dynamic marking. The music continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line with chords and eighth-note accompaniment. A finger number '5' is indicated in the right hand at measure 229.

235

Musical score for measures 235-242. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems of staves. The grand staff has a *p* dynamic marking. The music continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line with chords and eighth-note accompaniment.

242

Musical score for measures 242-248. The system consists of three staves. The top two staves are for the right hand, and the bottom two are for the left hand. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests. In measure 248, there are fingerings '1' and '3' on the right hand and '5' on the left hand. The bottom two staves show a bass line with long, flowing lines.

249

Musical score for measures 249-253. The system consists of three staves. The top two staves are for the right hand, and the bottom two are for the left hand. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests. In measure 249, there is a '4' fingering on the left hand. The word 'cresc.' is written above the right hand in measure 249 and below the left hand in measure 250. The bottom two staves show a bass line with long, flowing lines.

254

Musical score for measures 254-258. The system consists of three staves. The top two staves are for the right hand, and the bottom two are for the left hand. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests. In measure 254, there are 'x' marks above some notes in the right hand. The word 'ff' is written above the right hand in measure 256 and below the left hand in measure 257. The bottom two staves show a bass line with long, flowing lines.

259

cresc.

cresc.

(8vb)

264

fff

fff

(8vb)

269

fff

1

5

3

V

V

V

(8vb)

4. Impatience

274 $\text{♩} = 68$

Musical score for measures 274-278. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 68. The score is written for piano with three staves: Treble, Bass, and Grand Staff. The Treble staff contains whole rests. The Bass staff has a melodic line with dynamics *p* (piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *p* (piano). Fingerings 2, 3, and 4 are indicated. The Grand Staff shows a bass line with dynamics *p* and *legato*.

279

Musical score for measures 279-283. The piece continues in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp. The Treble staff has whole rests. The Bass staff features a melodic line with dynamics *mf* and *p*. The Grand Staff shows a bass line with dynamics *mf* and *p*.

284

Musical score for measures 284-288. The piece continues in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp. The Treble staff has a melodic line with dynamics *mf* and *p*. The Bass staff has a melodic line with dynamics *mf* and *p*. The Grand Staff shows a bass line with dynamics *mf* and *p*.

288

2/4

mf *p*

mf *p*

291

mf

mf

294

p *mf*

p *mf*

♩. = 112

298

p, cresc. *f*

solo

p, cresc. *sf* *sf* *f* *sf* *sf*

302

dim. *mp, cresc.* *f*

dim. *mp, cresc.* *f*

deciso

307

mf *f* *mf* *f* *p, cresc.*

mf *f* *mf* *f* *p, cresc.* *sf*

311

f *dim.*

sf *f* *sf* *sf* *dim.*

315

mp, cresc. *f solo*

mp, cresc. *f*

320

Musical score for measures 320-323. The score is written for piano in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The second system has a grand staff and a separate bass clef staff. The music features a mix of chords and melodic lines, with some measures containing rests.

324

Musical score for measures 324-327. The score is written for piano in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The second system has a grand staff and a separate bass clef staff. The music features a mix of chords and melodic lines, with some measures containing rests.

328

Musical score for measures 328-331. The score is written for piano in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The second system has a grand staff and a separate bass clef staff. The music features a mix of chords and melodic lines, with some measures containing rests.

332

337

341

N.B. Smaller notes were once added in live performance to afford a fuller sonority.

to Lara