

## **seasons of piano -- performance notes**

'seasons of piano' is a solo piano suite created to tell a story of different moods that a relationship can experience, from a playful summer to the cold war of the winter. It is not technically difficult, but attention to articulation and dynamic markings will help the performer with evoking the contrasting moods that are key to its effective performance.

### **1. melon soda**

Picture a bright summer scene, where a boy and girl meet for the first time at a vending machine and enter into, say, a light-hearted argument over a can of overflowing melon soda. This movement was inspired by the visual aesthetic and mood of the 2021 animated film, 'Words Bubble Up Like Soda Pop', which depicts a romance between two awkward teenagers.

Contrast, and careful attention to sudden mood and articulation changes, is important to produce the playful atmosphere of the piece — as well as an overall lightness in touch, not only in the staccato but also the legato passages. This also requires some care with quick pedalling to avoid muddiness or inflicting pedal on what should be a staccato note.

There are two main figures here, the staccato descending motif at bar 4 and the singing legato motif at bar 15, as well as a few other motifs that come and go as the piece unfolds. Each of these is a new section which should have a different mood. The demisemiquaver upbeat that heralds the main descending motif (first in bar 4, then again in bar 8 and onwards) should be quickly crushed, akin to a grace note, and played lightly — the triplet ornaments in bar 32 and 33 should similarly skip along without too much emphasis.

The contrapuntal section at bar 48-55 may require more practice than other sections, as this section requires each hand to sing independently with equal importance until the two hands come together at bar 55. Overall, nothing should be too heavy or dramatic — it should all retain a lightness and froth to it, similar to Francis Poulenc or the whimsical music of Yann Tiersen in the film *Amélie*.

### **2. do canopies form clouds**

This movement plays on the autumnal sadness that seems to occur when the first bright flush of something starts to wear off, whether it be a new hobby or new relationship. The dreariness of that feeling is evoked in the repeated motif "D-C-F-C" that runs through the entire movement, and is echoed in the title.

Many interpretations of this theme can be found in this movement, which may influence the thoughtful performer. One such performer could wish to bring out the colours present in relative calm and mundane circumstances — the small excitements within a peaceful life. This could be done within the close harmonies and long phrases, e.g. in the hand crossing in the opening — play with different note emphases and voicing to see what you like, here. Within the piece the D-C-F-C motif should be brought out to varying levels — at times forming a canopy high overhead, at other times shaping strong boughs of emotion.

This piece should be played with a legato touch, with a delicate and flowing mood throughout and a strong sense of continuity even with ebbs and flows in the momentum of the movement. There should be some level of rubato and emotive playing, however, this should be capped at a level of lightness appropriate to a daily life trickling along.

### **3. reverie**

This winter movement evokes the icy stages of a relationship, the cold war that demands an escape. From the dramatic opening which plunges the listener into a dream, to the haunting music-box melody, all should be a significant contrast to the other movements and at times dramatic, sad and overall played with simplicity.

The first 16 bars should immediately transport the listener. These should be played with gravitas, patience and a sense of far-reaching space — like the snowy landscapes of Narnia that appear past the lamp post. A performer should use their judgement and taste with the alternating drama and delicacy of their touch and dynamic in this opening, as well as in the similar closing of the movement.

The remainder of the movement is structured as a waltz with a simple left hand accompaniment — take care that the second and third beats of the left hand do not overpower the right hand, as these simply mark time. Rubato should be tasteful and not overdone, with the right hand dotted rhythms played crisply — almost double dotted. The melody starts with a simple statement, and becomes more ornamented over time — bring these out but take care not to overemphasise them. Similarly, resist the temptation to over-emote. The dynamics provide the expressiveness with this piece, which should balance a sense of sparkling momentum with the solemnness of distance and space.

### **4. dayfever season**

The final movement of the suite ties up all of the loose feelings from the previous seasons and brings them together in a hopeful spring — the promise of new joys amid the accustomed frustrations and fears, while acknowledging that good things come with bad (i.e. flowers conjure hayfever).

The main melody at bar 6 should be played with great energy and crisply, with attention to the staccatos. This ties the movement together and is intended to bring out the cheerful brightness that can be part of a fulfilling life.

Featured here are motifs from the first to third movements, restated and transformed. Awareness of their origin will help the performer to appropriately evoke the appropriate emotion and articulation — generally this should start out the same as where they first appeared before becoming wrapped up in the larger finale. Similar to melon soda, this requires attention to contrast and sudden changes, and faithfulness to the articulation, dynamic and phrase markings.

The quintuplet ostinato that appears first in the opening, as well as later on, may prove tricky for some hands. Practice may be required positioning the right hand so that it is comfortable to play; this should sound like a rippling stream without particular emphasis on any note (other than perhaps the highest). The final section, bar 53 to the end, requires attention to the accented left hand melody which should be brought out and clearly audible above the rippling right hand.