

MUSIC OF OUR TIME

MUSIC OF OUR TIME (Parnassus Revisited) is a new collection of graded piano books designed to introduce pianists to the musical vocabulary of the 20th century. In our era of new musical sounds and effects, the composers of **MUSIC OF OUR TIME (Parnassus Revisited)** have consciously attempted to introduce 20th-century idioms early in any student's playing career. However, while some of the sounds produced may seem new or unusual, the forms on which they are based are, for the most part, developed from the classic writers of earlier expressions of musical pedagogy. The entire series of books is graded and within each volume pieces have been placed in approximate order of difficulty. Fingering and pedalling suggestions have also been included by the composers, but these indications are suggestions rather than firm dicta on technical matters.

The overall intention of the **MUSIC OF OUR TIME (Parnassus Revisited)** series of piano pieces is to reveal the natural growth of contemporary music from the styles and ideas of earlier musical forms. **MUSIC OF OUR TIME (Parnassus Revisited)** is, in effect, a celebration of contemporary idioms for contemporary pianists.

INTRODUCTION

To help the teacher guide students through MUSIC OF OUR TIME (Parnassus Revisited), we have prepared a teaching manual to accompany the series. The term “teaching manual” may not be the very best definition of this supplementary volume — it is more in the nature of a resource book, including suggestions for performance techniques, information about the history of various 20th-century idioms, suggested materials for further listening and reading, and short analytical discussions of all the MUSIC OF OUR TIME (Parnassus Revisited) repertoire.

Often younger students have a certain difficulty “relating” 20th-century music to other styles of musical compositions; we believe that an integrated approach to 20th-century repertoire which explains not only the style of new music but also its roots and structure is the best method of understanding 20th-century compositions.

In the series itself, short notes for the student explain the basics of any given piece and establish a beginning vocabulary of concepts and terms. The teaching manual expands these concepts for the teacher in more technical language and greater depth. As well, the manual suggests various teaching approaches which will facilitate a greater degree of student comprehension of musical structure, syntax, and vocabulary.

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MUSIC OF OUR TIME (Parnassus Revisited)

BOOK FIVE

THE ROCKING CHAIR (Coulthard)

ANALYSIS: Simple ternary form with the A section from bars 1 to 10 subdivided into two phrases, from bars 1 to 4 and from bars 5 to 10. The B section is from bars 11 to 20 ending with the “striking of the clock” on the dominant, G sharp. The return of A occurs at bar 21 leading to a final three-bar coda — again the “clock strikes” on the dominant, G sharp, but the bass remains on C natural. There are two tonal centres, C sharp and C natural, with the music alternating between centres. Harmonic interest includes the use of the tritone at cadence chords (bar 10). In bar 26 the cadence is based on the dominant minor of C sharp with a 4-3 appoggiatura. The “clock” effect is achieved by having the student pluck the G sharp string inside the piano. (The effect is optional, and may be played a little slower to facilitate matters.)

HISTORICAL IDIOMS: The cadence form used in bar 10, i.e. the tritone as a 4-3 appoggiatura, was not used until this century; most composers including STRAUSS, DEBUSSY AND STRAVINSKY have used it.

TECHNIQUE: The syncopated rhythm in this piece in 4/8 time gives the effect of the uneven movement of a rocking chair. Another now almost “classical” example of this type of rhythm can be heard in RAVEL’s MOTHER GOOSE suite, in the piece called “Beauty and the Beast”. In this waltz one feels the stress on the 2nd beat of the bar giving a syncopated effect. Play legato, gently and “lazily” except for the “striking of the clock”. Some pedal and fingerings have been added but these should be altered to suit the needs of individual students if the teacher wishes.

TRAFFIC (Hansen)

ANALYSIS: “Throughcomposed”, using two themes, a melodic “questioning” motive and an “answering” phrase using 2nds. The tonal centre is D. The main harmonic interest is provided through the programmatic use of 2nds. and small tone clusters (i.e. Bar 2). Notice the use of rests to provide dramatic effects in the texture.

HISTORICAL IDIOMS: The use of small clusters and seconds is a standard device in 20th century literature; the comical use of these effects suggests French models.

TECHNIQUE: Establish a lively tempo with not much rubato. Sharp staccato effects, where marked, will emphasize the contrast between melodic and harmonic sections. Pay particular attention to the dynamics; the extreme contrasts will create echo effects, if properly executed.

RENAISSANCE CHRISTMAS SONG (Duke)

ANALYSIS: An original piece in folk-song style, Renaissance Christmas Song is formally A, A¹, B, A², with four balanced 4-bar phrases. The tune is in the Dorian mode although the harmonies are occasionally chromatically altered. Notice the use of a counter-melody at the first return of phrase A and the frequent use of sustained “drone”-type basses. The unexpected use of sharp dissonances on accented beats (bars 2, 5 and 7) creates a special type of lyric effect, one much savoured in late Renaissance music.

HISTORICAL IDIOMS: The folk-song qualities of this piece and the extended use of modality suggest the style of much 20th century English music by such composers as VAUGHAN WILLIAMS, WARLOCK and MICHAEL TIPPETT. The “Renaissance” flavour suggests such early masters as WILLIAM BYRD or perhaps CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI.

HARMONIC IDIOMS

FALSE RELATIONS	The use of major and minor 3rds or 6ths in juxtaposition.
MODAL CADENCES	Instead of V-I or IV-I cadences, the use of modes often produces new cadence forms such as lowered VII-I cadences.
ADDED NOTES	Adding 2nds, 6ths, 7ths, etc., to triadic chord structures.
PANDIATONIC	The harmonic acceptance of all degrees of the diatonic scale with each other.
FOURTH CHORDS	Chords built up with perfect 4ths rather than with 3rds.
STREAMS OF HARMONY	“Counterpoint” of harmony — the use of contrasting contrapuntal lines each thickened through the use of chords.
PEDAL CHORDS	Instead of the old idea of pedal notes, many composers in the 20th century use whole chords for pedal effects.
TONE CLUSTERS	The use of chords made up of adjacent 2nds or of clusters of tightly packed notes. They can be played traditionally as fingered chords or in a modern style using the fist or even the forearm.

RHYTHMIC IDIOMS

ASYMMETRICAL RHYTHMS	The use of uneven time signatures such as 5/4, 7/8, etc., or the use of even time signatures unevenly divided, such as 3+3+2/8.
HEMIOLA	Juxtaposition of dissimilar triple meters, i.e., 3/4 and 6/8, so that the basic accent of a measure is altered.
CROSS RHYTHMS	The use of two different time signatures at the same time, producing unexpected accents.