
WIRRIPANG AUSTRALIAN PIANO ANTHOLOGY (2011)
NEW AUSTRALIAN REPERTOIRE FOR GRADES 1 - DIPLOMA

Dr Katie Zhukov

Dr Katie Zhukov will perform and discuss pedagogical aspects of new Australian repertoire from Wirripang Anthology (2011). The demonstration will include new works by Betty Beath, Diana Blom, Colin Brumby, Anne Carr-Boyd, Amanda Handel, Andrew Helberg, May Howlett, Jocelyn Kotchie, John Martin, Paul Paviour and John Peterson. The pieces range from Classical and Romantic to Jazz and contemporary in style and will provide teachers with new pieces for AMEB extra lists, HSC and ANZCA examinations. The discussion of repertoire will include aspects of style, structural analysis, technical and musical challenges and ways of overcoming these in teaching.

The concept for the *Wirripang Australian Piano Anthology* was seeded at the last APPC conference in Sydney in 2009 with the aim of producing a body of recently composed Australian repertoire for piano teachers. Wirripang is a publisher that specialises in Australian music, including scores, books and CDs. They commissioned all of their composers to compose and submit works suited to piano students from beginner to advanced level. I have received these in November 2010 and after careful review a short-list of repertoire for each grade was compiled. The works were recorded in January-February 2011 at the School of Music, University of Queensland, and Critical Notes were written in April 2011. The prototypes of the books were circulated amongst teachers for comment regarding the grading of the repertoire and each composer had the opportunity to review and amend the Critical Notes about their pieces.

My demonstration consists of at least one piece from each grade and includes works by Betty Beath, Diana Blom, Colin Brumby, Anne Carr-Boyd, Amanda Handel, Andrew Helberg, May Howlett, Jocelyn Kotchie, John Martin, Paul Paviour and John Peterson. They range in style from Classical and Romantic to Jazz and contemporary and provide teachers with new repertoire for extra lists for the AMEB, HSC and ANZCA examinations. The discussion includes aspects of style, structural analysis, technical and musical challenges, and ways of overcoming these in teaching.

Grade 1

***La Señorita* – Colin Brumby**

After an off-beat introduction, the piece settles into a flowing Spanish song.

The structure is a binary form with Introduction (bars 1-2): A (bars 3-18) A¹(bars 19-34) B(bars 35-42) B¹(bars 43-50). The key is C-major.

The RH melody needs to be brought out above LH accompaniment. Care should be taken not to accent the last note of phrases. The longer 4-bar phrases could build towards the middle of the phrase, then taper off. To choose the right tempo, feel one strong beat per bar: this will get your feet tapping!

Grade 2

***Nick Nack Paddywack* – Paul Paviour**

This old traditional will be familiar from the recent children's TV show *The Tweenies*.

It starts with the Introduction (bars 1-4) and follows with 2 verses of the song (bars 5-12 and a more decorated and extended version in bars 13-28) and a short Coda (bars 28-30). The key is G-major, with some quick modulations in bars 21-26.

A steady tempo is needed in order to manage complex lines in the LH and the modulations. Make sure the melody is heard above the moving parts. The *rit.* in bar 24 should feel as a slight hesitation, a question mark, before carrying on to a confident end.

Grade 3

***Circus Invention* – Jocelyn E Kotchie**

This piece realises the 2-part invention form in a fun circus format: we can hear clowns and acrobats running about.

The structure of invention becomes clear when imitations between hands are brought out. Initially the imitations are at 1-bar: in Section A (bars 1-4) RH theme is followed by LH (bar 2); in Section B (bars 5-8) LH starts first. Section C (bars 9-12) modulates from the Tonic key of C-major to the Subdominant F-major and the imitations occur at one beat, with LH behind the RH. Last section A¹ (bar 13-end) is a variation of the first section A.

The piece is excellent for working on balance between hands. Each new entry has to be brought out louder than the other part to make imitations clear. The phrasing often overlaps, so care needs to be taken when lifting hands off at ends of slurs.

Grade 4

Ball Games – Basketball – Diana Blom

The piece depicts a basketball match, with the ball dribbling, players running and trumpet calls to signify half time and end of the game.

The piece is in 2 main sections A (bars 1-22) and A¹ (bar 23-end). The melodic material consists of 2^{nds}, 5^{ths} and tritones (bars 16-18 and 46-49).

The piece has many rhythmic challenges, in particular divisions into 5 and 7 notes. This is best achieved by working with metronome to spread the notes evenly over the beat and practising the change from normal divisions (4 notes) to unusual groupings and back. Attention to dynamics will create necessary drama and surprises.

Grade 5

Watching the River Flow – John Peterson

This quick piece imitating the flow of the river has an unusual time signature: $\frac{11}{8}$. It requires careful counting to make sure that the last 2 quavers are not stretched to make a $\frac{12}{8}$.

The structure is built in 4-bar phrases, based on new harmonies: C-major and E-flat-major alternate in bars 1-4; d-minor and B-flat⁷ in bars 5-8; G¹¹ and E-flat⁷ in bars 9-12; F⁷ in bars 13-17; G⁷ in bars 17-20; B-flat⁹ and d-minor⁷ in bars 21-24; a-minor in bars 25-28; and the last 2 bars in d-minor.

Aside from the rhythmical challenge, it is important to match the speed, evenness and tone when passing the quavers from LH to RH to create the flowing effect. Start the piece gently and build up gradually to the loudest part in bar 17. An exciting piece to play while improving the sense of rhythm!

Grade 6

Dreamboat Blues – Amanda Handel

Set in a waltz metre, this is a very jazzy piece with cool harmonies, depicting perhaps a smoky dark bar where sailors drink and talk about their dreams.

The structure is ternary: Introduction (bar 1) A (bars 2-10) B (bars 11-19) B¹ (bars 19-27) A¹ (bar 28- end). The key is c-minor, and the middle section runs over a cycle of 5ths harmonic progression: from G⁷ (bar 11) it chromatically slips down through G-flat⁷ to F major (bar 12), then to B-flat-major (bar 13), e-flat-minor (bar 14), A-flat-major (bar 15), then heading for the cadence with a tritone substitution - d-minor⁷(bar 16) to G⁷ (bar 17) ii-V-i. The whole

harmonic sequence is repeated with slight variation in section B¹. There are many 7th, 9th and even 11th chords adding wonderful lush colour.

In addition to challenging chords, the rhythm is easy going and natural but may take some work: the triplets and quaver-two-semiquavers groups are played as written, but all of the two-quaver groups are swung (played as crotchet-and-quaver triplet). The goal is to achieve effortless, cool and natural flow.

Outlines – Andrew Helberg

The title suggests sketches of a melody/ story, hinting at a quick impression and glimpses of ideas.

The structure is binary framed by introductions: Introduction (bars 1-4) A (bars 5-28) Introduction¹(bars 29-32) B (bars 33-52) A¹ (bars 53-76) Introduction² (bars 77-80) B¹ (bar 81-end). Key is D-major, with frequent use of 2^{nds} and 5^{ths}.

The main rhythmical challenge is the cross-rhythm of $\frac{6}{8}$ against a $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature: the quaver pulse has to remain constant throughout the piece. The melody needs to be brought out above the accompanying figurations and shaped sensitively. Long pedals will help produce longer melodic lines: one pedal per bar and when possible one pedal over 2 bars. The piece has many quick shifts of mood and colour at a flowing tempo and is well worth the effort.

Grade 7

Very Slow Jazz – Ann Carr-Boyd

As the title suggests, this is a very slow piece with jazz influenced harmonies.

After a tentative start with a short melodic idea being extended with each repetition, the piece begins in bar 19 (A). Each new section sounds like an improvisation on the original statement: A¹ (bars 38-57) A² (bars 58-74) Coda (bar 75-end).

Despite 4 flats key signature, the tonality is ambiguous. There are many 7th and 9th chords based on B-flat, E-flat and G, and RH melody is often chromatic without an obvious tonal centre. All of this adds to an impression of jazz improvisation.

One of the difficulties of the piece is its very slow beginning: it is important to hear moving quavers (such as in bar 33) as flowing, but not hurried, to get the sense of pulse before starting. The other challenge is to maintain the improvised character by using *rubato* in the runs: shaping the phrases with a *crescendo* on the way up and a *diminuendo* on the way

down. Long pedals will help to sustain the melodic lines. Take time in the *Cadenza* in bar 50: the pulse can be slightly stretched here.

Light Through a Stained Glass Window – Betty Beath

Here we are in a church with sun shining through a stained glass window. The piece starts slowly in a contemplation, then goes through many quick changes of emotions and eventually returns to a peaceful state.

The form is a loose ternary: A (bars 1-14) B (bars 15-26) A (bar 27-end).

The piece has many challenges on different levels: the timing is complex with the time signature of $\frac{5}{4}$ and often surprising subdivisions of the beat into 2, 3, 4, and 6 notes. There are many tempo changes and expressive markings aimed at producing a flexible and colourful performance. The phrases are often of different lengths requiring careful pacing to give them direction. An excellent piece for developing musicality and sensitivity of touch!

Grade 8

Parade – May Howlett

This is a scene from the circus with animals, acrobats and clowns processing in front of the audience before the show begins.

The overall form is ternary: A (bars 1-49) B (bars 50-80) A (bar 81-end). However, within each large section there are many smaller segments of contrasting moods and keys. While the piece is largely tonal, it does travel through many diverse keys: it starts in F-major, goes to D-flat-major (bar 18), has a fun bi-tonal moment in bars 28-29 where both hands play a chromatic scale but start a semi-tone apart, goes to D-major (bar 50), stumbles on E-flat ⁷ (bars 55-56), stays on A pedal point (bars 57-59), wanders to D-flat (bar 70) before arriving in C-major in the final section (bar 81-end).

While fun to play, the piece offers plenty of challenges: maintaining a steady tempo in the beginning in order to keep the pulse when the fast runs arrive (bars 28-29), keeping quaver pulse the same when changing time signature from $\frac{2}{4}$ to $\frac{6}{8}$ (bar 50) and back to $\frac{2}{4}$ (bar 77), realising all the different moods and dynamics and, of course, the *glissando* at the end. Practice the *glissando* from the top note, RH in a fist with the thumb sticking out and LH fingers 2-3-4-5 held together in one block, lightly gliding on top of the keys across your nails to the last note virtually not pressing down. Once the hands are co-ordinated and come off

together on the correct note, try pressing down lightly but watch out for ripping the skin off your fingers!

Diploma

***Thorn of the Rose* – John Martin**

The buffs of film music will feel at home here: *Godfather* or *Love Story*? You decide.

After a short introduction (bars 1-4), the form is strophic with each 16-bar verse returning in a more elaborated version: A (bars 5-20), A¹ (bars 21-37) A² (bars 38-57) A³ (bars 58-end).

The key structure follows the main sections: a-minor, subdominant d-minor, tonic A-major and finally back to a-minor.

From a performance point of view the main challenge is to maintain interest and spontaneity by playing expressively and with a great deal of *rubato* and awareness of colour. Shape each phrase with a swell towards the highest note and feel free to experiment by elongating different notes on the repeats. Long pedals are essential here, as changing too often can create a “choppy” effect. Aim for an intimate declaration of passion. A good piece to advance touch sensitivity, tempo flexibility and expression.

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About the Author:

Dr Katie Zhukov was educated in Ukraine, Australia and the US (Masters from the Juilliard School of Music, New York, and PhD from the UNSW). Prior to being appointed a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Queensland she has taught a wide range of subjects at the Sydney, Queensland and Western Australian Conservatoriums. Dr Zhukov has performed 8 concertos with professional and amateur orchestras, and given many solo and chamber music recitals, partnering Australia's finest string players. Her interest in Australian piano music is evidenced by her 2 solo CDs *Ragtime, Dreams and Visions* and *Six Profiles* (Wirripang, 2008 & 2010).