

12-1-2012

# Night music: The twentieth century nocturne in piano teaching

Jessica L. Murdock

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

NIGHT MUSIC: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY  
NOCTURNE IN PIANO TEACHING

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Arts

Jessica L. Murdock

College of Performing and Visual Arts  
School of Music  
Piano Performance/Pedagogy

December 2012

This Dissertation by: Jessica L. Murdock

Entitled: *Night Music: The Twentieth Century Nocturne in Piano Teaching*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Arts  
in College of Performing and Visual Arts in School of Music, Program of Piano  
Performance/Pedagogy.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Murdock, Jessica L. *Night Music: The Twentieth Century Nocturne in Piano Teaching*.  
Published Doctor of Arts dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2012.

The solo piano repertoire contains numerous examples of nocturnes by a wide variety of composers. Chopin's nocturnes receive the most play time and are often used for pedagogical purposes. The purpose of this study is to explore the other piano nocturnes that could be used in piano pedagogy. The first chapter provides a discussion of the nocturne as a genre, including the definition of "nocturne" and the differences between the 19th and 20th Century conceptions of it. The second chapter lists nocturnes composed during the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, as well as biographical and stylistic information of their composers. The remainder of the study focuses on individual nocturnes and their pedagogical value. Intermediate to advanced level nocturnes by a variety of composers, including Dave Brubeck, Benjamin Britten, Erik Satie, Francis Poulenc, Samuel Barber, Charles Griffes, and Lowell Liebermann, are examined.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The daunting task of writing a dissertation was not nearly as daunting as it might have been in my case, thanks to a number of people. First, I wish to express my undying gratitude to my family. My dear husband, Rob, has been a source of endless encouragement. I am forever grateful to my parents, who taught me my first piano lessons. They have supported me and believed in me throughout my entire journey to becoming a "doctor." I am thankful for my sisters and best friends, Lyndsi and Mikayla. I am especially grateful for Lyndsi's editing expertise and patience.

I am grateful for the members of my Doctoral Committee, who sacrificed time to read this dissertation and provide comments and suggestions for its improvement. I am grateful for the mentoring of all my piano teachers: Dr. Caleb Harris, Dr. Errol Haun, Dr. Brent Jones, and Debbie Ellsworth. Each of them has inspired me to become a better pianist and person.

Lastly, I express my appreciation to those music publishers who granted me permission to use the musical examples included in this dissertation.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Music centered around the night has long been popular. Such pieces are titled Nocturne, *Nachtstück*, Notturmi, or simply Night Pieces. The solo piano nocturne, specifically those written by John Field and Frédéric Chopin, is traditionally used in piano pedagogy, with Field's nocturnes often used to prepare students for Chopin's nocturnes, which are among the more accessible of Chopin's piano works. Other composers during the nineteenth century composed nocturnes, including Grieg, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, and Scriabin; all of these works are also used in piano teaching. In contrast, Schumann wrote a very different set of night pieces, *Vier Nachtstücke*, Op. 23, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Composers continued to write night pieces in the twentieth century; however they are not often used in piano pedagogy. The purpose of this study is to expand the teaching repertoire of nocturnes and related pieces by identifying twentieth and twenty-first century nocturnes viable for piano teaching. The origins of the nocturne and the creation of the genre are discussed, as well as the contrasting *Nachtstück*. However, this discussion is relatively brief, as there already exists extensive research and literature concerning the nocturne's origins. An overview of twentieth and twenty-first century composers of the solo piano nocturne follows. Individual nocturnes practical for piano teaching are then examined.

## The History of the Nocturne: An Overview

The word "nocturne" is French for "of the night." Its German equivalent is *Nachtstück*, and its Italian equivalent is *notturmo*. Both the German and Italian titles were used earlier than "nocturne" for instrumental and vocal works. The Italian term *notturmo* was common in the eighteenth century as a title of a work or movement performed outdoors during the night. Although *notturmi* could be vocal pieces, most often, they were instrumental; examples include Mozart's *Notturmo*, KV 286, for four orchestras and Haydn's eight *Notturmi* for chamber orchestra. *Notturmi* were closely related to the serenade, because of their performance at night and use of *pizzicato* accompaniment in combination with a lyrical melody. Also, like the *notturmi*, serenades included both vocal and instrumental works.

Despite their similarities, serenades and *notturmi* have a number of differences. Serenades were typically performed at 9 p.m., while *Notturmi* were performed at 11 p.m.<sup>1</sup> Originally, the serenade was meant as an evening musical greeting, performed outdoors for a beloved or a person of rank.<sup>2</sup> The serenade's texture of melody with accompaniment, also associated with a singer plus guitar texture, became the model for the solo piano nocturne of the nineteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, four different types of nocturnes coexisted. The first type was for three or more instruments; the second for voices, most often *a capella*; the third for instrumental duos.<sup>3</sup> The fourth type emerged as the dominant type—the solo

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<sup>1</sup>Chan Kiat Lim, *Twentieth Century Piano Nocturnes by American Composers: Echoes of Romanticism*. (D.M.A. Diss., University of Cincinnati, 2004), 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Nocturnes for instrumental ensembles include Karol Kurpinski's Nocturne for horn, bassoon, and viola. Felice Blangini and Diomiro Tramezzani both composed sets of vocal nocturnes. Some include two vocal parts with piano or guitar accompaniment. Examples of the third type include Francesco Molino's Nocturne Op. 38, No. 2 for flute and violin or guitar; Jean-Louis Tulou's Nocturne Op. 48 for flute and harp.

piano nocturne. John Field is credited as being the first composer to use the term "nocturne" as a title, which he first used in 1812 for a solo piano work. However, Field tried out several different titles before settling on the "nocturne." Romances, serenades, and pastorals were all used as titles before the nocturne; some of these titles were later changed to "nocturne."<sup>4</sup> In the early 1800s, the terms "romance," "serenade," and "pastorale" were all interchangeable with "nocturne." Writings from that era, including those by Czerny, comment on the similarities between the serenade and French romance compared to the nocturne. According to Czerny, the nocturne was an imitation of vocal serenades. He further described the nocturne's character as soft, fanciful, gracefully romantic, even passionate, but never harsh or strange.<sup>5</sup>

The texture Field used for some of his nocturnes—a singing melody over an arpeggiated accompaniment—is now thought of as the "nocturne style." However, this texture was not Field's invention, neither is it exclusive to the nocturne genre. Furthermore, not all nocturnes use this style.

David Rowland suggests that a more appropriate term for the style used for nocturnes between 1800-1830 would be a "romance/nocturne style" or some other broader term.<sup>6</sup> The most common features associated with the romance and nocturne include left-hand accompaniment, consisting of broken-chord figuration spanning up to two octaves, and right-hand melody that becomes progressively more decorated. Because of the larger span in the accompaniment, the style is particularly reliant on the pedal. Simple forms, such as ABA or ABAB, are typically used. These features are generally

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<sup>4</sup> Patrick Piggott, *The Life and Music of John Field 1782-1837: Creator of the Nocturne* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 115.

<sup>5</sup> Jim Samson, *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 35.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 36.

accepted as the standard characteristics of the nocturne beginning with Field; however, some nocturnes, such as Field's Third Nocturne, fail to use the "nocturne style" at all. Other nocturnes use the style, but not consistently.

Nevertheless, Field's nocturnes do consistently emphasize the melodic component of the nocturne genre. The lyrical melodies prominent in Field's nocturnes are a reflection of the cantilena sections of Italian opera. Similarities between Field's nocturnes are also found in their exploitation of the capabilities of the new piano, specifically in the need for subtle pedaling to sustain the arpeggiated harmonies. His use of simple forms, lyricism, and use of pedal in his eighteen nocturnes are historically important as antecedents to the more renowned nocturnes of Chopin.

The new nocturne genre may have been transmitted to Chopin via Maria Szymanowska, a Polish piano virtuoso and composer, who probably became acquainted with Field's nocturnes while on her Russian tour from 1822-1823; Field had been living in Russia since 1803. Szymanowska published her first nocturne in 1825, two years before Chopin's first nocturne.

Chopin's twenty-one nocturnes, which span his entire creative life, share some similarities with those of Field and Szymanowska; Chopin's nocturnes all feature a singing melody, accompaniment, and ternary or arch forms. However, Chopin's nocturnes are more sophisticated formally, melodically, and harmonically, even though they bear superficial resemblance to Field's nocturnes. Chopin's nocturnes expanded on Field's concept of the nocturne by enlarging the overall form, decorating the melody more elaborately, and adding dramatic elements to the middle section.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Stewart Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature* (Belmont, CA: Schirmer, 1996), 295.

Furthermore, Chopin's formal procedures are not as simple as Field's ternary form. Chopin often features a middle contrasting section that is usually more agitated, but his formal structure is more complex than a simple ternary form. Many of Chopin's nocturnes could be classified generally as being constructed in an aria-type form—ABA'. The Nocturne No. 9 in E-flat, Op. 9, No. 2, demonstrates an expanded structure—AA'BA''B'A'''CC', with each repetition consisting of an ornamented variation.<sup>8</sup> As Chopin aged, he relied less on the aria style and form. In some of the later nocturnes, for example Op. 48, No. 1, there is more of a sense of progression and development in lieu of the simpler ABA or ABAB forms.<sup>9</sup>

Chopin's melodic ornamentation is unique and inventive due in part to his interest in opera and admiration of particular opera singers, including Rubini, Henriette Sontag, and Pauline Viardot.<sup>10</sup> The type of melodic ornamentation used in Chopin's nocturnes reflects the *bel canto* style he so admired, for it is vocal in its approach, rather than based in instrumental virtuosity. Connected with this melodic style is the characteristic rhythmic freedom and suppleness associated with the nocturne, which is not as obvious in the nocturnes of Field. Another unique aspect of Chopin's melodic lines in the nocturnes is his surprising inflections that suggest unusual harmonic colors. Many of the later nocturnes are much more elaborate and complex in both form and melodic ornamentation; Chopin's later ornamentation moves further from *bel canto* style and closer to Impressionism.<sup>11</sup> English pianist Katharine Goodson described Chopin's melodic

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<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Bellman, *Improvisation in Chopin's Nocturnes* (D.M.A. Diss., Stanford University, 1990), 28.

<sup>9</sup> Samson, 48.

<sup>10</sup> Bellman, 11.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

style as having "a good deal of *fioritura*" while "making the decorations an integral part of the piece"; the ornaments are "part of the [thematic] material itself."<sup>12</sup>

Chopin's accompanimental patterns and harmony are more complex than Field's in his use of subtle contrapuntal textures and careful voice leading. While Field's nocturnes use stock accompanimental figures, Chopin's accompaniment is orchestral in its approach. Chopin's use of accompanimental figures are not as limited as Field's either; for example the reprise of the Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1, features a new, fuller, more passionate accompanimental pattern than the opening.

Harmonically, Chopin's compositional language is firmly rooted in Romanticism, manifest through his use of Neapolitan sixths, flatted submediants, augmented sixth chords, harmonic sequences, and mode mixture. However, Chopin's harmonies are often obscured by a profusion of appoggiature, suspensions, anticipations, passing tones, and chains of dominant sevenths and diminished chords.<sup>13</sup> This harmonic ambiguity made Chopin's nocturnes noteworthy, and also influenced later composers such as Fauré.

Besides Field and Chopin, a host of other composers also composed solo piano nocturnes during the nineteenth century. A short list of some of the other composers of nocturnes during this period includes the following: Liszt, Thalberg, Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Glinka, Balakirev, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Skryabin, Rachmaninov, and Alkan. In general, the characteristic features of Chopin's nocturnes—lyrical, supple melody with arpeggiated accompaniment, ternary or arch form, and a subdued opening and ending with a contrasting middle section—were the typical features of nocturnes by these other composers.

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<sup>12</sup> Katharine Goodson, "A Master Lesson on Chopin's Nocturne in B minor" *The Etude* (May 1918), 311.

<sup>13</sup> Lim, 39.

The popularity of the nocturne is also apparent in its prominence in contemporary dictionaries. Whereas dictionaries of that period had previously included all four types of nocturnes, by the late nineteenth century, most dictionaries only listed the solo piano nocturne. Nineteenth century piano nocturnes are described in period dictionaries as dreamy, sentimental, serene, melancholic, or "love pieces."<sup>14</sup>

The description of dreamy, serene, melancholic moods coincides with Czerny's afore-mentioned description, which also included passion and aversion to the harsh or strange. Perhaps the most common thread between all the nocturnes of this era are their character and mood. The "nocturne style" cannot be considered the unifying thread, for many of the nocturnes diverge from this generalized style. Rather, the commonality between these pieces is their mood and lyricism.

### **Nachtstück: The German Night Piece**

The German equivalent of the French Nocturne, *Nachtstück*, serves as the title of Schumann's Op. 23. These four pieces are quite unlike the nocturnes of Field, Chopin, and other nineteenth century composers. Instead of sentimental and dreamy moods, Schumann focuses on darker subjects. Schumann composed his Op. 23 during his stay in Vienna in 1839. During his final weeks there, he learned that his brother, Eduard, was critically ill. Too far away to visit him at his death bed, Schumann instead had to wait for news in letters sent by Therese, Eduard's wife. The dark, heavy subject of death must have weighed on Schumann's mind; his working title for Op. 23 was first *Leichenfantasie*, or "Corpse Fantasy."<sup>15</sup> He told Clara in a letter that while composing

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>15</sup> John Worthen, *Robert Schumann: Life and death of a Musician* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 162.

this work he "always saw funeral processions, coffins, [and] unhappy despairing people."<sup>16</sup>

Schumann originally intended to include descriptive titles for each of the four pieces: *Trauerzug* (Funeral Procession), *Kuriose Gesellschaft* (A Curious Assembly), *Nächtliches Gelage* (A Night Party), and *Rundgesang mit Solostimmen* (A Ring-Dance Song with Solo Voices). However, these titles were not published with these pieces; instead, the original edition contains only tempo and mood indications. Although these descriptive titles were never published with the opus, they provide apt descriptions of the pieces. The first is indeed a funeral march, reminiscent of the fourth movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, which Schumann had reviewed in 1835 for his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. The second piece gets its "curious" or "queer" sound from its frequent mood changes, perhaps a representation of the different characters Florestan and Eusebius. The third piece is an ecstatic, virtuosic waltz. The fourth and final piece suggests a lullaby.

Although he did not use *Leichenfantasie* as the title of his Op. 23, it is interesting to note that Friedrich von Schiller did use it as a title of one of his poems in 1780. The mood of the poem is a fitting comparison to Schumann's Op. 23, especially the first movement funeral march. After receiving advice from Clara, Schumann eventually decided to title the work simply *Nachtstücke*. Despite its shared title, E.T.A. Hoffman's *Nachtstücke*, a collection of short stories published in 1817, does not appear to have inspired Schumann's work.

The term *Nachtstücke* was later used by twentieth century composers, including Paul Hindemith and Kurt Schwertsik. More importantly, the character and mood of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Schumann's *Nachtstücke* coincides with the character and mood of many twentieth century night pieces. In contrast to the serene, melancholic, and even passionate nocturne, the *Nachtstücke* is more harsh and strange, exactly what Czerny said the nocturne was not.

### **Twentieth Century Piano Night Pieces**

Into the twentieth century, the night piece continued to be a popular genre in piano works. In France, Fauré, Debussy, Poulenc, and Satie all composed solo piano nocturnes. In America, where the Romantic spirit still lingered, the Romantic "nocturne" genre also flourished through the compositions of Barber, Griffes, Copland, Crumb, Dello Joio, and Rochberg. A number of Russians also composed nocturnes during the twentieth century, including Skryabin (op. 61), Gliere, Stanchinsky, and Tchernin. English composers Vaughan Williams and Holst wrote one nocturne each. Examples of nocturnes are also found in Mexico with Carlos Chavez, in Brazil with Henrique Oswald, and in Hungary with Béla Bartók. The nocturne continues to be popular with composers late in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century; Lowell Liebermann, Richard Faith, Judith Zaimont, Dave Brubeck, and Behzad Ranjbaran have all written nocturnes for solo piano. Pedagogical composers Catherine Rollin, Robert Vandall, and Martha Mier also have composed several nocturnes suitable for the less-advanced student.

Many twentieth century nocturnes diverge from the lyricism of the nineteenth century nocturne associated with Chopin. Whereas the nineteenth century nocturne could be described as serene and lyrical, the twentieth century nocturne features a variety of moods, textures, techniques, and affects. For example, as a whole, Fauré's Thirteen

Nocturnes portray a darker emotion than the nocturnes of Field and Chopin. In his dissertation on Fauré's nocturnes, Joseph Valicenti compares Fauré's use of the genre to other modern composers, stating that modern composers, such as Hindemith, imbued it with a "character of night visions, not always of poetic dreaminess, but often of a more phantasmagoric nature."<sup>17</sup> The fascination with night visions is in line with Schumann's *Nachtstücke* rather than Chopin's Nocturnes.

Many twentieth century composers seem to have been preoccupied with nightmares and feverish dreams of night. For example, Bartók's *Musiques Nocturnes*, from *Out of Doors* (1926), evokes a more fearful attitude toward night through its use of clusters and bird imitations. David Burge describes *Musiques Nocturnes*, thus:

[It] capture(s) the feeling of being alone in the forest at night...by replicating that emotional atmosphere of the cool darkness and that tinge of anxiety or unease that can underline such an experience.<sup>18</sup>

This trend is continued in George Crumb's *Ghost Nocturne for the Druids of Stonehenge*, from *Makrokosmos II*, which uses extended techniques to create a truly eerie sound. Both seem to follow the German type of night piece rather than the French type.

Chan Kiat Lim, in his dissertation, "Twentieth Century Piano Nocturnes by American Composers: Echoes of Romanticism," implies that all twentieth century nocturnes follow the Romantic tradition. However, the previous discussion proves otherwise, as does Bianca Tiplea Temes in her article about early twentieth century nocturnes by Manuel de Falla and John Cage. Temes states that the nocturne genre is

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph Anthony Valicenti, *The Thirteen Nocturnes of Gabriel Fauré* (D.M.A. Diss., University of Miami, 1980), 15.

<sup>18</sup> David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 79.

erroneously identified solely with Romanticism.<sup>19</sup> Not every nocturne, specifically many of those written during the twentieth century, feature the characteristic lyricism associated with Romanticism. Temes specifically identifies Falla's *Noches en los jardines de España* and Cage's *The Perilous Night* as twentieth century nocturnes. Both feature economy of sound and material as well as flexibility in form, harmony, and compositional attitude.<sup>20</sup> However, Temes considers Falla's *Noches en los jardines de España* as being one conceptual level higher than the heritage of Romantic and Impressionistic nocturnes, merging the Romantic and Impressionistic traditions with Spanish rhythmic and melodic characteristics,<sup>21</sup> while Cage's nocturne, performed using prepared piano, is a modern timbre mutation of the genre.<sup>22</sup>

Contemporary authors identify night in art as having several aspects. The night is associated with ambiguity, monsters, and loss of reality; furthermore, night is capable of producing surreal images of the unconscious.<sup>23</sup> The French poet, Arthur Rimbaud, expresses these ideas in *Nocturne Vulgaire*. The poem is fragmented, written as a parade of quickly changing images. The result is not a dream; it is a nightmare—a fall into a personal inferno of the subconscious.<sup>24</sup>

The theme of night is rampant throughout art, literature, and music. Vladimir Jankélévitch attempts to explain the continued popularity of the nocturne:

They...bear witness to music's enduring preference for that privileged moment when form and images dim into the indistinct, moving toward

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<sup>19</sup> Bianca Tiplea Temes, "Manuel de Falla – John Cage: bipolaridad estilística en el repertorio pianístico nocturne de la primera mitad del siglo XX," *Cuadernos de Música Iberoamericana* 20 (July-December 2010), 172.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 179.

chaos, and for midnight which submerges all multicolored patterns into its great shadow.<sup>25</sup>

The idea of night, the blurring of contours, lends to the idea of abstraction, which is ideally suited to music, a highly abstract, subjective medium.

### **The 19th-Century Nocturne in Piano Pedagogy**

Repertoire guides to piano music, such as Jane Magrath's *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*, Maurice Hinson's *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire* 3rd Ed., and Cathy Albergo and Reid Alexander's *Piano Repertoire Guide: Intermediate and Advanced Literature*, include many nocturnes as appropriate teaching literature. These three books are the most comprehensive and current resources available to the average piano teacher.

In order to argue the importance of the nocturne in piano pedagogy, the tradition of its use in the teaching studio will be established. The nocturnes of both Field and Chopin are deeply entrenched in the repertoire used for piano teaching. The tradition actually began with Chopin himself. In addition to being a famed composer and performer, Chopin was also a successful teacher. He used his own nocturnes, along with those by Field, as etudes—studies in producing a beautiful vocal tone and legato.<sup>26</sup>

Field's nocturnes are usually used as a preparation for Chopin's nocturnes; Hinson describes them as fine introductions to the Chopin nocturnes.<sup>27</sup> However Magrath states that some of Field's nocturnes are just as hard as those by Chopin. Magrath categorizes Field's Nocturne No. 9 in E Minor as one of the easiest because of its "soft and

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<sup>25</sup> Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, Translated by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 94.

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: pianist and teacher*, ed. Roy Howat, Translated by Naomi Shohet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 77.

<sup>27</sup> Maurice Hinson, *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*, 3rd ed., (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 302.

melancholy writing" and "unadorned melody."<sup>28</sup> Nocturne No. 1 in E-flat and Nocturne No. 5 in B-flat are categorized as a little more difficult; Nocturne No. 2 in C Minor, Nocturne No. 3 in A-flat, and Nocturne No. 7 in A Major are the only other nocturnes included as accessible to the student. Hinson classifies all the Field nocturnes as intermediate to moderately difficult pieces, singling out Nocturne No. 4 in A as one of the best and most interesting of the Field nocturnes.

Many of Chopin's nocturnes are included in Magrath's book. She categorizes the Nocturne in C Minor, Op. Posth. as the easiest, but gives her opinion that it is not among his best works. Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op. 9, No. 2, Nocturne in G Minor, Op. 15, No. 3, and Nocturne in G Minor, Op. 37, No. 1 are identified as being the easiest of his truly inspired nocturnes. Chopin's Nocturne in B Major, Op. 32, No. 1, Nocturne in F minor, Op. 55, No. 1, Nocturne in E Minor, Op. 72, No. 1 (Posth.), and Nocturne in C-sharp Minor, Op. Posth. are difficult works but are still accessible to the advanced student. Hinson likewise identifies Op. 15, No.3, Op. 32 No. 1, Op. 37 No. 1, and Op. 72, No. 1 as the easiest of the Chopin nocturnes. Hinson also cautions that they require an "expressive, cantabile style, with a wide range of tone, and a carefully adjusted and balanced rubato to support the emotional content."<sup>29</sup>

Grieg's *Notturmo*, Op. 54, No. 4, from *Lyric Pieces*, is another nineteenth century nocturne useful for teaching. Magrath describes it as an "elegant, highly expressive work for the advancing performer who is not yet ready to play Chopin nocturnes."<sup>30</sup> At the same level as the Grieg *Notturmo*, is one of Liszt's late works, *En Rêve: Nocturne*, S. 207,

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<sup>28</sup> Jane Magrath, *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*, (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 1995), 162.

<sup>29</sup> Hinson Guide, 197.

<sup>30</sup> Magrath Guide, 171.

one of the few pieces by Liszt that can be used for pedagogical purposes. Magrath describes this piece as a "beautiful and compelling short lyrical work."<sup>31</sup>

Debussy, although considered a twentieth century composer, wrote his Nocturne in D-flat early in his career. It is considered a "Romantic" composition, since the writing is not typical of his later, mature style. It is suitable for the early-advanced to advanced student.

Rachmaninoff's Three Nocturnes, like Debussy's, were composed early in his career, in 1887, and draw on the Romantic tradition. Although most of Rachmaninoff's piano music is accessible only to the very advanced student, these nocturnes are among his easiest compositions. Magrath classifies all three as on the same level as Chopin's G-minor nocturnes. Hinson also identifies them as suitable for the early advanced student, noting that they hint at Rachmaninoff's later, mature style and that they require a large hand span.<sup>32</sup>

Skryabin, Rachmaninoff's Russian compatriot, also composed nocturnes in the Romantic style early in his artistic career. Hinson classifies both the Two Nocturnes Op. 5 in F-sharp Minor and A Major and the Nocturne for the Left Hand in D-flat, Op. 9, as moderately difficult. He describes the first two "charming" and the latter "a ravishing, Romantic display piece."<sup>33</sup> Scriabin's later nocturne, *Poeme-Nocturne*, Op. 61, composed in 1912, is not written in a Romantic style, and its difficulties restrict its pedagogical uses to the exceptionally advanced student.

Many other Romantic era composers produced nocturnes suitable for the advanced student. A short list includes Borodin's Nocturne, Balakirev's Nocturne in D

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>32</sup> Hinson Guide, 623.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 719.

Minor and Nocturne in B Minor, Fanny Hensel's *Notturmo*, and Albeniz's *Cuba* (*Notturmo*) from Suite Española.

The next chapter contains a review of literature specific to the twentieth century nocturnes and their composers. It also discusses nocturnes written in the first part of the twenty-first century.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Relatively little has been written about contemporary solo piano nocturnes. Therefore, any literature concerning specific nocturnes as well as general information about composers and their compositional styles will be examined. In order to narrow the scope of this study, only nocturnes composed after 1900 will be included in the chapter. Nocturnes are listed after the discussion about the composer using bullets. In addition to the date restriction, nocturnes with limited information and availability will not be included here. For a more complete list of nocturnes, see Appendix A. This chapter is intended as background for the nocturnes that will later be discussed in greater detail. The chapter is divided into sections by country.

#### **American Composers**

Barber, Samuel (1910-1981)

American pianist and composer. Barber started composing at age seven. At age 14, he entered the Curtis Institute of Music, studying piano and singing. Early on in life, he traveled in Europe, which influenced his "Neo-Romantic" style of writing. In 1938, the broadcast of Toscanini conducting Barber's *Adagio for Strings* ensured his international stature as a composer. Barber's major output consists of songs. He received many awards and honors for his compositions during his lifetime.

Barber particularly loved the music of Bach, Chopin, and Fauré; however, his library also contained works by Poulenc, Stravinsky, and Britten.<sup>34</sup> Paul Wittke, who knew Barber personally, remembered Barber as having an enormous range of both feeling and knowledge, especially of literature.<sup>35</sup> Menotti stated that most of Barber's friends were writers, poets, and painters, rather than musicians.<sup>36</sup> Wittke identifies Barber's deep-rooted melancholia in the two aspects of Barber's music—passion and resignation.

Barber's Nocturne, Homage to John Field, Op. 33,<sup>37</sup> combines the flexible rhythmic patterns and tonal, arpeggiated accompanimental style of the nocturnes by nineteenth century composers with a twentieth century twelve tone row melody. Several scholars and performers consider the Nocturne as more influenced by Chopin than Field.<sup>38</sup> John Browning, one of the most important performers of Barber's works, implies this in his performance tips, which include playing with a *rubato*-like Chopin's and thinking of a big "Chopin-Scriabin" sound.<sup>39</sup>

This Nocturne is suitable for the advanced student or undergraduate piano major. Hinson describes the piece as moderately difficult;<sup>40</sup> Magrath classifies the work as a Level 10, which is the same level as the easiest Chopin Nocturnes. She also states that

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Dickinson, *Samuel Barber Remembered: A Centenary Tribute*, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 71.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Wittke, "Samuel Barber: A Personal Note," from *Samuel Barber: Complete Piano Music* (New York: Schirmer, 1993).

<sup>36</sup> Dickinson, 71.

<sup>37</sup> Hinson Guide, 70. Hinson finds similarities between Barber's Nocturne and Field's Nocturne No. 10 in E Minor.

<sup>38</sup> James Philip Sifferman, *Samuel Barber's Works for Solo Piano* (D.M.A. Diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1982).

<sup>39</sup> John Browning. "Samuel Barber's Nocturne," *Clavier* 25/1 (January 1986), 20-21.

<sup>40</sup> Hinson Guide, 70.

“imagination and strong musicianship with a fine sense of timing and control of sound” are required of the performer.<sup>41</sup>

- Nocturne, Homage to John Field, Op. 33 (1959)

#### Brubeck, Dave (b. 1920-2012)

American jazz composer, pianist and bandleader. His musical training started early; he was performing professionally with jazz groups by age 13. He studied at the College of the Pacific in Stockton, CA, where he and fellow students formed the Jazz Workshop Ensemble. In 1946, he began graduate studies at Mills College, where he studied composition with Milhaud. In 1949, he formed the Dave Brubeck trio, which became a quartet in 1951, and enjoyed popularity in the 1950s. Beginning in the 1970s, he organized several new ensembles. He has received numerous honors and awards.

Brubeck composed a book of Nocturnes, which he states are "directed toward the music teachers who do not teach Jazz, and to their students who are not yet committed to learn Jazz improvisations."<sup>42</sup> Brubeck expresses his hope that these pieces will "serve as a bridge for the classical pianist to understand the music that is often the foundation for my Jazz performances."<sup>43</sup> Some of the nocturnes are transcriptions of improvisations from his own recordings.

John Salmon, in his Introduction to the Nocturnes, compares Brubeck's Nocturnes to those of Field, Chopin, Fauré, and Barber, stating that all of them were inspired by Romanticism to "write great melodies, to luxuriate in the piano's unique warmth, to

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<sup>41</sup> Magrath Guide, 270.

<sup>42</sup> Dave Brubeck, "Foreword" to the score of *Nocturnes* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing, 1997).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

dream, to wander into worlds of pure sonic sensuality, to allow poetry full bloom."<sup>44</sup>

Salmon identifies characteristics of these Nocturnes that are similar to those of the nineteenth century, such as melancholy, calmness, sadness, ambiguity, and uncertainty.

This book of Nocturnes is quite accessible to the student; Brubeck himself states in the foreword that they are meant as teaching pieces. Cathy Albergo and Reid Alexander place these "delightful" nocturnes in the Intermediate level.<sup>45</sup>

- Nocturnes

#### Copland, Aaron (1900-1990)

American composer, pianist, writer, and conductor. He wrote in diverse genres and mediums including opera, ballet, film, and symphony. Although he studied piano and composition with many people, Nadia Boulanger was his most important teacher. He depended on his compositions and writings for his earnings rather than accepting a full-time teaching position at a university. Copland received many awards and recognitions world-wide. His compositional style is known as being distinctly American; he was influenced by the music he grew up with, like jazz and American folk songs.

Copland composed *Midsummer Nocturne* in 1947, but it wasn't published until 1977. The piece was dedicated to composer Phillip Ramey and was premiered on January 13, 1978, in Cleveland by Leo Smit. Copland considered several other title ideas before settling on *Midsummer Nocturne*, including *Pas de Trois*, *The Twilight Gather*, and *Wordless Song*.<sup>46</sup> This gentle, pastoral nocturne is in AABA form, reminiscent of popular

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<sup>44</sup> John Salmon, "Introduction" to Dave Brubeck, *Nocturnes* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing, 1997).

<sup>45</sup> Cathy Albergo and Reid Alexander, *Piano Repertoire Guide: Intermediate and Advanced Literature*, 5th ed., (Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing, 2011), 121.

<sup>46</sup> Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999), 515.

song.<sup>47</sup> Albergo and Alexander rate this piece as Elementary;<sup>48</sup> however Magrath rates it as Intermediate - Late Intermediate.<sup>49</sup>

- *Midsummer Nocturne*

Crumb, George (b. 1929)

Crumb taught at the University of Colorado-Boulder and later at the University of Pennsylvania. He received the Rockefeller Grant in 1964, the Pulitzer Grant in 1968, and became composer-in-residence at the Buffalo Center for the Performing and Visual Arts. Crumb's style features extended techniques, musical quotation, and theatricalism.

Crumb states that his influences include Mahler, Debussy, Bartók, and Webern. In particular, he considers his Four Nocturnes to have been inspired by Mahler.<sup>50</sup> Like Bartók, Crumb was also influenced by sounds in nature, including wind, birds, and insects.<sup>51</sup> This is perhaps most apparent in comparing Bartók's *Musiques Nocturnes* from *Out of Doors* to Crumb's *Ghost Nocturne for the Druids of Stonehenge*, from *Makrokosmos II*. David Burge suggests that Bartók's nocturne influenced Crumb's "Night Spell" movements, of which the "Ghost Nocturne" is the second.<sup>52</sup>

- Four Nocturnes (1964)
- *Ghost Nocturne for the Druids of Stonehenge (Night Spell II)*, from *Makrokosmos II*

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 515.

<sup>48</sup> Albergo and Alexander, 90.

<sup>49</sup> Magrath Guide, 326.

<sup>50</sup> Bálint András Varga, *Three Questions for Sixty-Five Composers*, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 49-50.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>52</sup> David Burge, 79.

Dello Joio, Norman (1913-2008).

American composer and educator. Dello Joio began his musical career at age 14 as an organist. He studied at many colleges, including Juilliard, Berkshire (with Hindemith), and Yale, and taught at several universities. His influences include Italian opera, Gregorian chant, and jazz. His music shows a flair for the theatrical.

Hinson classifies both the Nocturne in E and the Nocturne in F-sharp minor as moderately difficult.<sup>53</sup> Magrath classifies the Nocturne in F-sharp minor as being more difficult than the Nocturne in E. She criticizes the Nocturne in E as "not his (Dello Joio's) best work."<sup>54</sup> In contrast, she does not find fault with the Nocturne in F-sharp minor, but points out its use of fourths, fifths, seconds, and sevenths rather than thirds.<sup>55</sup> Nocturne in E is available in the October 2000 issue of *Clavier*, which featured a special article on Dello Joio.<sup>56</sup> *Night Song*, from *Lyrical Pieces for the Young*, is easier, classified as intermediate by Albergo and Alexander.<sup>57</sup>

- *Night Song*, from *Lyrical Pieces for the Young*, No. 4 (1963)
- Nocturne in E (1946)
- Nocturne in F-sharp minor (1946)

Faith, Richard

Faith studied at Chicago Musical College and Indiana University, and taught at University of Arizona. His compositions cover a wide range of genres: four operas, a number of symphonic works, three piano concerti, an oboe concerto, a mass, a cantata,

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<sup>53</sup> Hinson Guide, 257.

<sup>54</sup> Magrath, 344.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>56</sup> Debra Torok, "Endearing Lyrical Music from Norman Dello Joio," *Clavier* 39/8 (October 2000), 17-19.

<sup>57</sup> Albergo and Alexander, 90.

chamber music, more than one hundred songs, and many piano works. He has earned numerous awards and honors.

Hinson describes Faith's style as freely tonal and Neo-Romantic, featuring "broad, beautiful melodies that naturally unfold into stunning textured sonorities."<sup>58</sup> The slow, lyrical Nocturne of *Five Preludes and a Nocturne* is classified as moderately difficult.<sup>59</sup> Its difficulties are due in part to its chromaticism. The Two Nocturnes are also of moderate difficulty, requiring subtle pedal effects.<sup>60</sup> The first is expressive and features crossed hands and a "ravishing conclusion;" while the second features restless inner voices.<sup>61</sup>

- Five Preludes and a Nocturne
- Two Nocturnes for Piano

#### Gillock, William (1917-1993)

American composer and teacher whose compositions are notable for their melodic beauty. He studied piano and composition at the Central Missouri Methodist College. Gillock spent twenty years teaching privately in New Orleans, after which he focused on composing, conducting workshops, and adjudicating.

- Nocturne
- *Polynesian Nocturne*

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<sup>58</sup> Hinson Guide.,289.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

### Griffes, Charles Tomlinson (1884-1920)

Griffes is considered an "American Impressionist." He began studies in Germany at the Stern Conservatory in 1903 with plans to become a concert pianist. However, in 1905 he left the conservatory to study composition. He returned to America in 1907 and took a teaching position at Hackley School in Tarrytown, NY, composing in his spare time. His early works were influenced by German Romanticism. After 1911, his works show the influence of French Impressionism and Orientalism. In contrast, his late Piano Sonata is very dissonant and abstract.

Griffes composed one solo piano nocturne, *Notturmo*, No. 2 of *Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 6. According to his diary entries, he composed the piece in only three days, January 24-27, 1915. It was published by Schirmer in 1915 as part of *Fantasy Pieces*, which includes three pieces. Griffes added texts to each of the three pieces when he was preparing them for publication. The *Notturmo* includes verses from Paul Verlaine:

L'étang reflète,  
Profond miroir,  
La silhouette  
Du saule noir  
Où le vent pleure...  
Rêvons; c'est l'heure.

Of the *Fantasy Pieces*, the *Notturmo* is the most tonally obscure and rhythmically vague.<sup>62</sup> Griffes also composed an orchestral *Notturmo* and an orchestral Nocturne, but neither seems to be related to the solo piano work. Hinson describes the piano *Notturmo* as sensitive, poetic, and of moderate difficulty.<sup>63</sup>

- *Notturmo*, Op. 6, No. 2 (1915)

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<sup>62</sup> Donna K. Andereson, *The Works of Charles T. Griffes: A Descriptive Catalogue*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1983), 207.

<sup>63</sup> Hinson Guide, 357.

### Hofmann, Josef (1876-1957)

Polish-born American composer and pianist. A child prodigy, Hofmann toured Europe as a pianist and composer at age seven. In 1892, he became the only private piano student of Anton Rubinstein. His over 100 works, many under the pseudonym Michel Dvorsky, are written in a virtuosic, florid Romantic style. His interests and talents extended beyond music; he held over 70 patents for inventions, both scientific and mechanical, and he wrote two books on piano playing. He was also the first professional musician to make recordings.

Hofmann's *Nocturne-Complaint*, suitable for the late intermediate student, conforms to his post-romantic style. It features an expressive melody over accompaniment, in traditional romantic style. Hinson compares this work to Chopin's Nocturne in E-flat, Op. 9, No. 2.<sup>64</sup>

- *Nocturne-Complaint*

### Kay, Ulysses (1917-1995)

Kay studied at the University of Arizona and the Eastman School. He continued his composition studies with Hindemith at the Berkshire Music Center and Yale University and with Luening at Columbia University. Afterwards, he served in the military, where he played in the US Navy Band. Later, he taught at Herbert H. Lehman College, CUNY. Kay received many honors and awards for his compositions, which feature tonality with extreme chromaticism, lyrical melodies, rich harmonies, and polyphonic textures.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 406.

Kay's First Nocturne, composed in 1974, features a tone row. Its other characteristics include meter changes, dissonant harmonies, ostinati, and uneasy rhythms. Hinson classifies this work as moderately difficult.<sup>65</sup>

- First Nocturne

#### Liebermann, Lowell (b. 1961)

American composer, conductor, and pianist. Liebermann's musical training began with piano at age 8 and composition studies at age 14. Liebermann premiered his First Piano Sonata at Carnegie Hall at age 16. He studied composition at Juilliard with Diamond and Persichetti, and he holds bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from Juilliard. He is currently one of the most frequently performed and recorded composers in America.<sup>66</sup>

To date, Liebermann has composed eleven solo nocturnes for piano; each of them was commissioned by different groups, including the San Antonio International Keyboard Competition and the Adele Marcus Foundation. Many of the nocturnes have been received favorably by critics; *San Antonio Light* described Nocturne No. 3 as "exquisite" and *San Antonio Express* described the same work as "unutterably lovely."<sup>67</sup> F. Cord Volkmer, of *The Southampton Press*, reviewed Nocturne No. 11 as "gorgeous" featuring "broken clusters of notes like stars spanning the night sky, a tumultuous center

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 444.

<sup>66</sup> "Lowell Liebermann: Biography," <http://www.lowellliebermann.com/biography/index.html>, accessed 19 April 2012.

<sup>67</sup> "Lowell Liebermann: Works," <http://www.lowellliebermann.com/works/opus35.html>, accessed 19 April 2012.

section leading to a tender slightly bluesy finale;" he further found it "refreshingly tonal" and "melodically beautiful."<sup>68</sup>

- Nocturne No. 1, Op. 20 (1986)
- Nocturne No. 2, Op. 31 (1990)
- Nocturne No. 3, Op. 35 (1991)
- Nocturne No. 4, Op. 38 (1992)
- Nocturne No. 5, Op. 55 (1996)
- Nocturne No. 6, Op. 62 (1998)
- Nocturne No. 7, Op. 65 (1999)
- Nocturne No. 8, Op. 85 (2003)
- Nocturne No. 9, Op. 97 (2006)
- Nocturne No. 10, Op. 99 (2007)
- Nocturne No. 11, Op. 112 (2010)

#### Menotti, Gian Carlo (1911-2007)

Born in Italy; lived in America most of his life. Menotti studied at the Curtis Institute, where he met Samuel Barber. Menotti was a talented librettist, director and composer of opera. His *Amahl and the Night Visitors* was the first opera composed specifically for American television broadcast. Menotti's melodies are tonal or modal, lyrical, and memorable. He successfully fused music with theatre.

- Nocturne (Notturmo), from *Poemetti* (1937)

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<sup>68</sup> "Lowell Liebermann: Works," <http://www.lowellliebermann.com/works/opus112.html>, accessed 19 April 2012.

### Ranjbaran, Behzad (b. 1955)

American composer, born in Iran. At age nine, Ranjbaran was enrolled at the Tehran Music Conservatory, where he studied violin. When he moved to the United States, he studied composition at Indiana University and Juilliard, where he now teaches. Many of his works are inspired by Persian music, history, and literature.

- Nocturne: "A Night in a Persian Garden" (2002)

### Rochberg, George (1918-2005)

Studied and taught at the Curtis Institute. He also served as chair of the music department at University of Pennsylvania and as guest composer for numerous colleges and festivals. Rochberg's compositional style went through many changes over his life; his early style features a Stravinsky/Hindemith/Bartok idiom. He then turned to serialism, only to turn away from it in favor of extended chromaticism in a tonal idiom. His later music shows more Romantic influence.

*Partita Variations* consists of 13 pieces built around a tonal theme, which is an unnumbered piece between numbers 6 and 7. Some of the pieces vary the theme directly, others indirectly, and some not at all. The variations include a variety of forms: Praeludium, Intermezzo, Burlesca, Cortège, Impromptu, The Deepest Carillon, Capriccio, Minuetto, Canon, Nocturne, Arabesque, and Fuga a tre voce. Some of the pieces are tonal, others atonal, and some use contrapuntal techniques.

- Nocturne, from *Partita Variations* (1976)

### Rollin, Catherine

American pianist, composer, clinician, and teacher. Rollin studied at the University of Michigan and Oakland University. She is recognized worldwide and has published over 200 pedagogical piano pieces and taught over 150 workshops.

- Nocturne for the Left Hand
- *Summer's Nocturne*
- *Moonlight Nocturne*
- *Echo Nocturne*
- *Nocturne in Blue*

### Valenti, Michael (b. 1942)

Valenti has composed, arranged, and conducted music for television broadcasts, radio, and Broadway shows. His compositions include piano works, band pieces, ballets, musicals and more. His 10 Nocturnes for Piano show Broadway musical influences, with a harmonic language that is more Romantic than Contemporary. Hinson classifies them as ranging from intermediate to moderate difficulty.<sup>69</sup>

- 10 Nocturnes for Piano (1981)

### Vandall, Robert (b. 1944)

American composer, teacher, and clinician. Vandall studied at Baldwin-Wallace College, Berea, OH and the University of Illinois. He has now published over 400 works, most of which are piano pedagogy pieces. Currently, he and his wife maintain a successful private piano studio in Ohio. He is associated with Alfred Publishing.

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<sup>69</sup> Hinson Guide, 791.

- *Summer Nocturne*
- *Winter Nocturne*
- *Lydian Nocturne*
- *Iberian Nocturne*

### Australian Composers

Sculthorpe, Peter J (b. 1929)

Sculthorpe studied at the University of Melbourne and Wadham College, Oxford.

Sculthorpe could be considered a Nationalist composer, since he pays homage to Aboriginal stories and sacred sites through his music and is seen by the Australian musical public as the most nationally representative composer since Grainger.

In his preface to *Night Pieces*, the composer includes a few lines of poetry by Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902):

The moon one circle;  
stars numberless;  
sky dark green.

The work was written for and premiered at the festival of Perth in 1971. Sculthorpe explains that the first of these pieces, which actually consists of three parts, is based on the Japanese concept of *setsugekka*, which means "snow, moon and flowers"—the title of each section in the first piece. The composer further describes each section as a metamorphosis; "moonlight, for instance, may make snow of flowers, and flowers of snow; and the moon itself may be viewed as an enormous snowflake or a giant white flower."<sup>70</sup> Thus, each of the pieces is a "metamorphosis" of the others, with each of the three sections using transformations of similar harmonic and motivic structures. *Night* is

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<sup>70</sup> Peter Sculthorpe. Preface to *Night Pieces* (London: Faber Music, 1973).

composed using the same ideals of transformations, while *Stars*, the third piece in the collection, is a free transcription of part of *Sun Music I* (1965), an orchestral work also by Sculthorpe.<sup>71</sup> The composer states that the three pieces in the set are related by their gong-like punctuation and harmonic usage.<sup>72</sup>

- *Night Pieces*

### English Composers

Britten, Benjamin (1913-1976)

English composer, conductor, and pianist. His opera *Peter Grimes*, 1945, revived English opera. He rejected the "Modern" trends in music that moved away from tonality and instead used a tonal approach in his compositions so that audiences would enjoy his music.

Britten composed two nocturnes. The first is from *Sonatina Romantica*, composed in 1940, and originally comprising three movements: I. Moderato ma drammatico; II. Nocturne: Andante; III. Burlesque: Allegro con fuoco. However, only the first two movements are published. Although it was composed in 1940, the work was not performed until 1983, when it was premiered by George Benjamin in Aldeburgh's Jubilee Hall.<sup>73</sup> The Nocturne from this work fits the intermediate level.

The second nocturne, *Night Piece* (Notturmo), was composed in 1963 for the first Leeds International Pianoforte Competition. In comparison to the previous nocturne, this

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Stewart R. Craggs, *Benjamin Britten: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 43.

work is much more difficult, requiring fine balance and control. Hinson compares the middle section to Bartók's "Musiques Nocturne" from *Out of Doors*.<sup>74</sup>

- Nocturne, from *Sonatina Romantica* (1940)
- *Night Piece (Notturmo)* (1963)

#### Holst, Gustav (1874-1934)

Holst blended Hindu philosophy and English folksong. Vaughan Williams was a great influence and friend to Holst. He made a living chiefly through teaching and did not receive recognition for his compositions until *The Planets*, (1914-1916). His musical style is angular, contrapuntal, and modal, and his music also shows innovative rhythms and use of polytonality.

- Nocturne (1930)

#### Vaughan Williams, Ralph (1872-1958)

English composer, teacher, writer, and conductor. Vaughan Williams was the most important English composer in the first half of the twentieth century. He was influenced by contemporary Russian and French music as well as English folksong, developing a unique musical language based on three closely interdependent elements: a blending of common-practice tonality with modality and pentatonicism; a simple, yet free rhythmic idiom; and a seamless, extended melody. He is known for his orchestral works and vocal music.

- Nocturne, from *A Little Piano Book*

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<sup>74</sup> Hinson Guide, 147.

## French Composers

Fauré, Gabriel (Urbain) (1845-1924)

French composer, teacher, pianist, and organist. He received his early education from Ecole Niedermeyer. He also studied with Saint-Saëns. He was later the director of the Paris Conservatoire. His harmonic and melodic innovations influenced the generation of composers after him (e.g. Ravel).

Fauré called thirteen of his solo piano compositions nocturnes. However, according to his son, Philippe, he would have rather given his Nocturnes, Impromptus, and Barcarolles simpler titles, like “Piano Piece.” His son stated that the Nocturnes were not based on reveries or emotions inspired by the night; instead, “they are lyrical, generally impassioned, sometimes anguished or wholly elegiac.”<sup>75</sup>

Fauré’s Nocturnes are often compared to Chopin’s, and they indeed share similarities. Both use rhythmic suppleness, sophisticated arpeggio figuration, and lyrical melodies. Fauré’s Nocturnes, like Chopin’s, also feature contrasting ideas and a central episode as well as a “calm resignation of the whole,”<sup>76</sup> according to pianist Marguerite Long. However, Fauré’s Nocturnes, according to Roy Howat, are more individually stamped as well as more modally and harmonically adventurous.<sup>77</sup>

Fauré’s first seven nocturnes were written before 1900 and will not be discussed in great detail here. Nocturne No. 8 is the eighth piece in *Pieces brèves*, Op. 84. In the first edition, published by Hamelle, it is untitled, like the rest of the pieces in the opus.

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<sup>75</sup> Jean-Michel Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré: A Musical Life*, Translated by Roger Nichols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 48.

<sup>76</sup> Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Fauré*, Translated by Olive Senior-Ellis (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1981), 80.

<sup>77</sup> Roy Howat, *The Art of French Piano Music: Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, Chabrier* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 65.

However, in the second edition Hamelle assigned it a name—Nocturne. Jean-Michel Nectoux does not agree with the title Nocturne, stating that it “does not particularly suit” the piece, since it does not feature the typical “nocturne style” of lyrical melody over arpeggiated accompaniment.<sup>78</sup>

The late nocturnes, Nos. 9-13, are all set in the minor mode. In his dissertation on Fauré’s Nocturnes and Barcarolles, Richard Henry Crouch discusses the characteristic features of these late nocturnes. Nocturnes 9-11 feature continuum and unity; they have no clearly defined sections and no changes in key, tempo, meter, or texture. Nocturnes 12-13 feature larger ternary forms. Characteristic of these late nocturnes is the use of motivic writing, contrapuntal textures, modality, ambiguity, and dissonance. Impressionistic elements also find their way into the writing through the use of whole-tone scales, non-functional harmony, and emphasis on sonority and color.<sup>79</sup>

Fauré’s Nocturnes are not often used in piano teaching, perhaps because they require a musically mature student. In his dissertation on Fauré’s thirteen Nocturnes, Joseph Valicenti states that the Nocturnes “present no problems for the mature, technically advanced student.”<sup>80</sup>

- Nocturne No. 8 in D-flat Major, Op. 84, No. 8 (from *Pieces brèves pour Piano*, 1869-1902)
- Nocturne No. 9 in B Minor, Op. 97 (1908)
- Nocturne No. 10 in E Minor, Op. 99 (1908)

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<sup>78</sup> Jean-Michel Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré: His Life Through His Letters*, Translated by J. A. Underwood (London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1984), 323.

<sup>79</sup> Richard Henry Crouch, *The Nocturnes and Barcarolles for Solo Piano of Gabriel Faure*, (Ph.D. Diss., The Catholic University of America, 1980).

<sup>80</sup> Valicenti, 82.

- Nocturne No. 11 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 104, No. 1 (1913)
- Nocturne No. 12 in E Minor, Op. 107 (1915)
- Nocturne No. 13 in B Minor, Op. 119 (1922)

#### Poulenc, Francis (1899-1963)

French composer, member of *Les Six*, and pianist. His compositional style is direct and seemingly simple. Poulenc is considered one of the most important composers of French art songs, *melodies*. He studied piano with Viñes, from whom Poulenc learned to play clearly but colorfully through subtle use of the damper pedal. Poulenc did not believe in innovating through harmonic, textural, or rhythmic means; his emphasis was on melody. Poulenc's compositions usually place a lyrical melody in the forefront, supported by broken chord accompaniment. Thus, the nocturne genre must have been attractive to his compositional preferences.

Poulenc composed eight nocturnes as a set of *Nocturnes pour Piano*. The first was composed in 1929, while the others were completed between 1933 and 1938. Poulenc admitted his preference for abstract titles, such as nocturne, intermezzo, and novelette. He stated that "the least contact with the keyboard unleashes the creative spirit in me. Since this type of piece does not evoke an image, I tend to use abstract titles."<sup>81</sup>

In general, the eight Nocturnes are concise, devoid of any displays of empty bravura. However, the set is criticized as being "uneven," which is Keith Daniel's explanation for why they are not performed often.<sup>82</sup> Hinson disagrees with Daniel's conclusion, stating that the Nocturnes contain "some of Poulenc's most beautiful

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<sup>81</sup> Keith W. Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982), 178.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

writing."<sup>83</sup> Poulenc himself favored some of the nocturnes over the others; Daniel proposes that he probably favored the ones he recorded: Nos. 1, 2, and 4.<sup>84</sup>

- *Nocturnes pour Piano*

Satie, Erik (1866-1925)

Satie's compositional style combines simplicity with his ironic wit. Early in life, he studied piano at the Paris Conservatoire. His teacher, Emile Descombes, described him as lazy and unmotivated, although he was talented. In 1905, he enrolled at the Schola Cantorum and studied under Roussel and d'Indy. He wrote in a variety of genres, including piano works, cabaret music, and ballet.

Satie composed five nocturnes; the first three were conceived and published as a group. In a letter to Valentine Hugo on August 24, 1919, a pleased-sounding Satie describes the first nocturne as a prelude, the second as short and tender, and the third as rapid and dramatic.<sup>85</sup> Satie's notebooks contain many rejected openings for the nocturnes, as well as a nearly completed sixth nocturne.<sup>86</sup> Hinson includes the nocturnes as among Satie's best works.<sup>87</sup> Alan Gillmor agrees with Hinson, describing them as "among Satie's most effective piano works, a very pure distillation of the pathos of the composer's lonely existence."<sup>88</sup> Gillmor goes so far as to compare them to the nocturnes of Fauré,

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<sup>83</sup> Hinson Guide, 609.

<sup>84</sup> Daniel, 178.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Orledge, *Satie the Composer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 194.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>87</sup> Hinson Guide, 671.

<sup>88</sup> Alan M. Gillmor, *Erik Satie* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 229.

identifying arpeggiated left-hand figures, metric and tonal flexibility, gentle lyricism, and classical restraint as similarities between the two.<sup>89</sup>

- Cinq Nocturnes

Tansman, Alexandre (1897-1986)

French composer and pianist of Polish birth. He received a doctorate of law from the University of Warsaw in 1918. Tansman won many awards for his compositions in Poland, but critics criticized his music as being too boldly chromatic and polytonal. When he moved to Paris in 1919, he became friends with Stravinsky and Ravel. He achieved international success and earned several honors. Hinson classifies *Quatre Nocturnes* as intermediate, although they require a large hand span.<sup>90</sup>

- "Night Mood" (Nocturne), from *Happy Time*, Book 3
- *Quatre Nocturnes* (1952)
- Nocturne, from Cinq Impressions (1934)

### **Hungarian Composers**

Bartók, Béla (1881-1945)

Hungarian composer, ethnomusicologist and pianist. With Kodaly, he collected Hungarian folk songs, which deeply affected his compositional style. Bartók's "Musiques Nocturnes" is the fourth movement from the *Out of Doors (Szabadban)* suite. The suite was composed in 1926, published first in 1927 by Universal. Later publications of the suite include an edition by Boosey & Hawkes in 1954 and another edition by Universal in 1990. The nocturne from the suite is dedicated to Ditta Bartók-Pásztory, Bartók's student-

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Hinson Guide, 771.

turned-second wife. The first and fourth movements of the suite were premiered by the composer in Budapest on December 8, 1926.

Bartók also composed six volumes of *Mikrokosmos* for his son Péter, specifically for pedagogical purposes. Each volume is graded; each volume is progressively more difficult than the previous. The fourth volume, which includes another nocturne, is at an intermediate level.

- *Musiques Nocturnes*, from *Out of Doors* (1926)
- Nocturne, from *Mikrokosmos* Vol. 4 (1932-39)

### **Italian Composers**

Respighi, Ottorino (1879-1936)

Respighi's greatest influences were his teachers Martucci and Rimsky-Korsakov. He was a professor of composition in Rome for many years. His compositional style is eclectic, featuring use of plainsong, modes, virtuosity, and even pageantry.

- Notturmo

### **Russian and Eastern European Composers**

Skryabin, Aleksandr Nikolayevich (1871-1915)

Russian composer and pianist. His compositional style progressed from the traditional Romantic idiom to a mystical, highly unique style, with a harmonic language that was progressive, but not quite atonal. His early compositions show the influence of Chopin, Weber, and Mendelssohn. Skryabin studied at the Moscow Conservatory from 1888-1892. He worked as a composer, teacher, and performer. His later works, which

includes *Poeme-Nocturne*, show his preoccupation with *Misteriya*, the idea of a multi-media work that leads the listener to a supernaturally heightened plane.

- *Poeme-Nocturne*, Op. 61 (1912)

#### Tcherepnin, Alexander (1899-1977)

Russian composer, conductor, and pianist. The Russian Revolution of 1917 forced his family to move to Tbilisi, Georgia; in 1921 they moved again to Paris. In the 1930s, he toured the East and stayed in China to study Chinese classical music. In 1949, he moved to Chicago to teach at DePaul University. Tcherepnin wrote piano pieces, orchestral works, ballets, operas, and chamber works. His compositional style emphasized percussion, rhythmic transformation, unusual scales, and writing for under-used instruments.

- Quatre Nocturnes
- Nocturne in G-sharp minor Op. 2, No. 1 (1919)
- Nocturne Op. 8, No. 1 (1919)

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The remainder of this dissertation discusses in greater detail selected nocturnes from those listed in Chapter II. Nocturnes were selected according to three criteria: level, availability, and pedagogical appeal. The selected nocturnes are analyzed, focusing on their use in pedagogy, in Chapter IV.

#### **Selection Criteria**

The three criteria nocturnes were judged on include level, availability, and pedagogical appeal. Nocturnes discussed in this dissertation fall into three different levels: intermediate, early advanced, and advanced. The following outlines the criteria for each level:

#### Intermediate

- May contain scales moving up and down the keyboard over several measures
- Melodies may be in both hands
- Contains chords, including seventh chords
- Rhythmic patterns used may include sixteenth notes and dotted rhythms
- May contain some ledger notes
- Other repertoire in this category: Schumann, *Album for the Young*, Op. 68; Clementi, *Sonatinas*, Op. 36; Bartók, *For Children*, Vol. I

### Early Advanced

- May contain scales in octaves
- Melody may be in an inner part, or melody and accompaniment may be in the same hand
- Full four to five note chords in both hands
- Requires larger hand stretches and large leaps
- Polyrhythms and complex rhythmic patterns
- Other repertoire in this category: Bach, Two-Part Inventions; Beethoven, Sonatas, Op. 49; Debussy, *Children's Corner Suite*

### Advanced

- Scales in thirds, tenths, and octaves
- Intricate melodic lines
- All types of major, minor, diminished and augmented chords spanning more than an octave
- Intricate rhythms and complex meter
- Requires greater velocity and overall technical facility
- Other repertoire in this category: Bach, *Well-Tempered Clavier*; Mozart, Sonatas; Chopin, Nocturnes; Debussy, *Suite bergamasque*

Each nocturne selected must also be available to the public. Because this dissertation deals with nocturnes as a pedagogical tool, nocturnes that would not be accessible to most piano teachers will not be discussed here. Therefore, nocturnes existing only in manuscript version or nocturnes out of print were not selected for

analysis. Because this study is being conducted in the United States, nocturnes not readily available in this country were not examined. The costliness of each nocturne was also taken into account, since most piano teachers and students operate with limited budgets.

Selected nocturnes also contain pedagogical appeal and are pedagogically sound. The qualifying pieces were in harmony with the playing apparatus, not requiring awkward hand positions. Furthermore, they also contain elements that render them attractive to a piano student; attractive elements include but are not limited to: lyrical melodies, harmonic surprises, dynamic interest, and extra-musical connotations.

### **Analysis Method**

The nocturnes selected were analyzed traditionally in terms of form, chord structure, and melodic structure. Compositional style was also examined, as well as the general character of the piece. The nocturnes were also analyzed from a pedagogical view; this analysis included a synopsis of the work's difficulties and suggestions for teaching.

## Selected Nocturnes

Table 1: Selected Nocturnes

Title	Composer	Publisher	Published as a Solo or Collection
INTERMEDIATE			
Nocturne for the Left Hand	Catherine Rollin	Alfred	Solo
<i>Moonlight Nocturne</i>	Catherine Rollin	Alfred	Solo
<i>Polynesian Nocturne</i>	William Gillock	Willis Music Company	Solo
<i>Summer Nocturne</i>	Robert Vandall	Alfred	Solo
Nocturnes: <i>Lost Waltz (Edited Version)</i> ; <i>I See, Satie</i> ; <i>Blue Lake Tahoe</i> ; <i>Looking at a Rainbow</i> ; <i>Strange Meadowlark</i>	Dave Brubeck	Alfred	Nocturnes (Collection)
Nocturne	Gian-Carlo Menotti	Belwin Publishing	<i>Poemetti</i>
<i>Notturmo</i> (from <i>Mikrokosmos</i> )	Béla Bartók	Boosey & Hawkes	Collection
Nocturne	Ralph Vaughan Williams	Oxford University Press	A Little Piano Book
Nocturne (from <i>Sonatina Romantica</i> )	Benjamin Britten	Faber Music	Moderato & Nocturne
<i>Night Song</i>	Norman Dello Joio	Edward B. Marks Music	<i>Lyric Pieces for the Young</i>
<i>Midsummer Nocturne</i>	Aaron Copland	Boosey & Hawkes	Collection
10 Nocturnes for Piano: Nos. 5 & 10	Michael Valenti	Hal Leonard	Solo
EARLY ADVANCED			
<i>Night Pieces</i>	Peter Sculthorpe	Faber Music	Solo
Nocturne	William Gillock	Willis Music Company	Solo
<i>Quatre Nocturnes</i>	Alexandre Tansman	Universal Edition	Solo
<i>Cinq Nocturnes</i>	Erik Satie	Alfred	Solo
Nocturne	Gustav Holst	Masters Music Publications	Two Pieces, H. 179

Table 1: Selected Nocturnes

Title	Composer	Publisher	Published as a Solo or Collection
ADVANCED			
Nocturne	George Rochberg	Theodore Presser Co.	<i>Partita Variations</i>
Nocturnes	Francis Poulenc	Heugel	Solo
Nocturne No. 10 & No. 11	Gabriel Fauré	Durand	Solo
Nocturne	Samuel Barber	Hal Leonard	Collection
<i>Notturmo</i>	Charles Griffes	Masters Music Publications	<i>Fantasy Pieces</i> , Op. 6
Nocturne No. 1, No. 2, & No. 5	Lowell Liebermann	Theodore Presser Co.	Solo

## CHAPTER IV

### ANAYLSIS OF NOCTURNES

The night pieces, or nocturnes, discussed in this chapter represent a fraction of the music available in this genre in the intermediate to advanced level. The pieces selected for this discussion are among the best in the genre. The nocturnes were chosen according to the guidelines set forth in the previous chapter and were analyzed from both a theoretical and pedagogical perspective. The pieces are presented in order of difficulty.

#### **Intermediate Nocturnes**

Catherine Rollin: Nocturne for the Left Hand; *Moonlight Nocturne*

Pedagogical composer Catherine Rollin has published several works under the name "nocturne;" the Nocturne for the Left Hand and *Moonlight Nocturne* will be discussed. The idea for the first may have been suggested by Scriabin's Prelude and Nocturne for the Left Hand, Op. 9; however the compositional language and level of the piece is quite different. Rollin notes that the nocturne may be played with the left hand alone or with both hands. Although she does not state it, it is also easily played with the right hand alone. The texture of the piece, which is consistent throughout, is feasible with either or both hands (see Example 1). The piece is written in G Major and features an ABA' form. Two main factors make the piece appealing—harmonic twists and *rubato* playing. Brief sections in C minor and B-flat Major provide harmonic interest, while *rubato* is indicated by written directions of *accelerando*, *ritardando*, and *fermati*. The use

of *rubato*, ternary form, and lyricism coincide with the nineteenth century "nocturne style."

9 *a tempo* *mf* *cresc. e poco accelerando*

12 *rit. e dim.*

Ex. 1. Catherine Rollin, Nocturne for the Left Hand, mm. 9-12.

From a pedagogical perspective, the *rubato* is the most difficult aspect of the nocturne. One of the most helpful tools for teaching *rubato* is conducting, which can be incorporated into teaching in several ways. First, the teacher can conduct the student, guiding them to play *rubato*. Second, the student can conduct while the teacher plays, and the student learns to feel the gradual changes in tempo with the body. Third, the student can conduct while humming or thinking the piece. In this way, the student can make decisions about tempo changes and not have to worry about playing the notes at the same time.

Another aspect of the piece that may be challenging to the early intermediate student is voicing, which is difficult because of the thicker chords. The advantage of playing the piece with the left hand alone is that the thumb plays the top part of each chord—the note that needs to be brought out. However, extra work may be needed to

achieve this. Learning to voice is a matter of learning how to distribute weight behind each finger. Several exercises help train the student to voice, one of the most effective of which is to hold the note to be brought out while releasing the others. In effect, the student is playing the important note legato and the others staccato. This trains the student to put more weight into the voiced note.


This nocturne has a number of potential pedagogical tools, including teaching voicing and *rubato* as already described. Furthermore, this nocturne could be used to strengthen left hand technique, since this piece requires the left hand to play both the accompaniment and melody.

*Moonlight Nocturne*, also by Catherine Rollin, is reminiscent of Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 2; both are in the minor mode and feature arpeggiated chords. The affect of each piece is also very similar. Rollin's C minor *Moonlight Nocturne* is in ternary form with an added coda. One of the most appealing features of the piece is its harmonic progressions, which feature linear movement, as the bass note changes by a half step for each measure. The arpeggiated style of accompaniment as well as the bass movement is shown in Example 2. The use of ternary form and lyrical melody over arpeggiated accompaniment fit the "nocturne style" model of the nineteenth century.



Ex. 2. Rollin, *Moonlight Nocturne*, mm. 1-4.

The left hand in this piece is more difficult for a student to read, due to the use of pervasive ledger lines. Simplifying the piece to its chord structure may help the student with reading the left hand. While analyzing the chords, the student should practice them in blocked position, as shown in Example 3. Similarly, the B section can also be practiced by blocking the chords, but this time with both hands as shown in Example 4. By analyzing each chord using its letter name, not the roman numeral, the student can quickly locate the notes of the chord. Since this piece includes some nonfunctional harmony because of its linear motion, analyzing the piece using roman numerals does not always make sense, particularly to a student.



Cm      Eb<sup>+</sup>      Eb      F      Fm      Cm      D      G

Ex. 3. Rollin, *Moonlight Nocturne*, mm. 5-12. Chord structure.



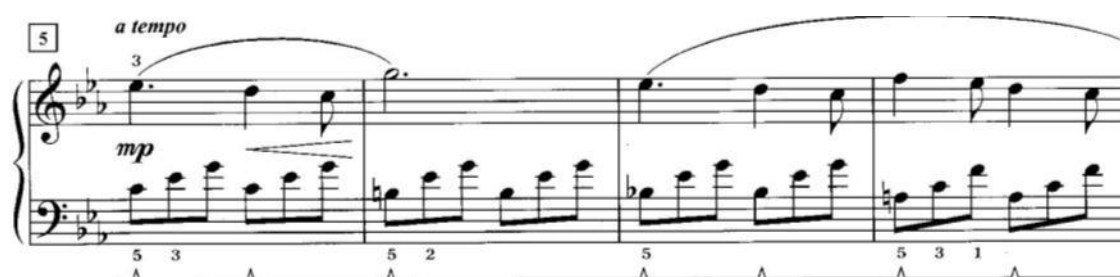
Fm   Ab      Bb   Bb      Eb      Gm      Fm   Ab

Ex. 4. Rollin, *Moonlight Nocturne*, mm. 21-24. Chord structure.

This piece could also be used to effectively teach or reinforce the concept of chord inversions. Most of the chords are triads, and all three possibilities are included in

the piece: root position, first inversion, and second inversion. The student should note that the B section features all root position chords.

The 6/8 time signature and balance presents possible challenges, including playing the arpeggiated chords in the left hand fluently. The rhythm in the right hand is more difficult since it has a variety of rhythmic values; compare the right and left hands in Example 5. Because the left hand consists of steady eighth notes for the first page, the execution of the right hand rhythm can be facilitated by learning the right hand with the left hand simultaneously at the outset.



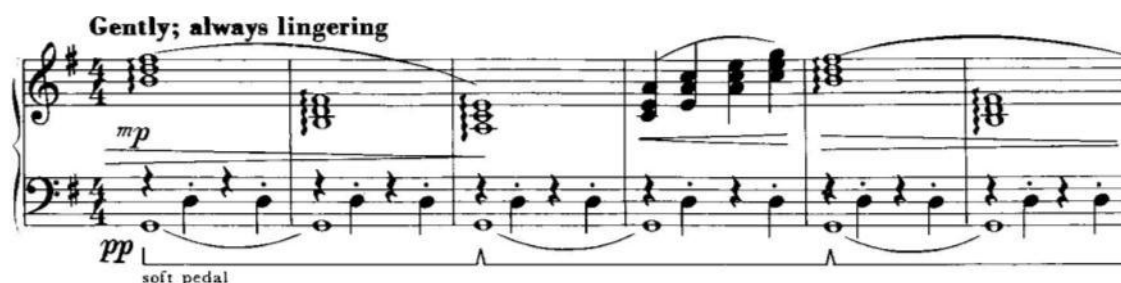
Ex. 5. Rollin, *Moonlight Nocturne*, mm. 5-8.

Balance between the hands may also be challenging, since the ratio of notes between the melodic line and harmonic line is often 1:3. Furthermore, the hands are close in range, which makes it more difficult for the ear to distinguish between the two lines. The student must learn to play the melodic line louder and the harmonic line softer. A variety of exercises can be used to teach the student to balance, including: singing, "ghosting" the left hand (making the motion of playing but not actually depressing the key), and/or playing the melody legato and the harmony staccato.

In summary, *Moonlight Nocturne* could be used to teach balance, 6/8 meter, ledger lines, and chord inversions. In connection with chord inversions, the nocturne could also be used as a theory exercise by analyzing each chord by its letter name.

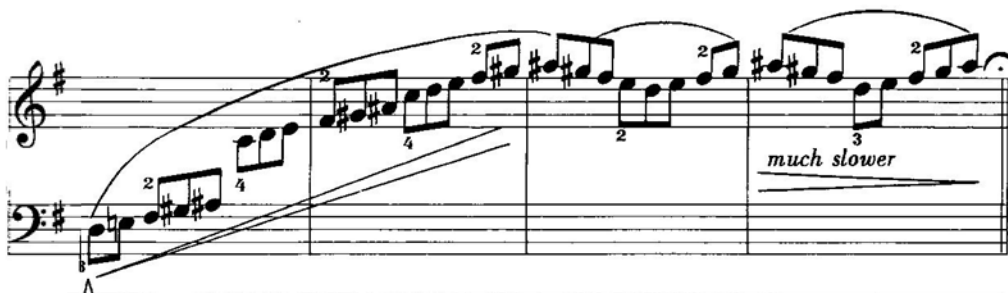
### William Gillock: *Polynesian Nocturne*

William Gillock's *Polynesian Nocturne* is slightly more difficult than Rollin's pieces. Dedicated to the Hawaii Chapter National Guild of Piano Teachers, it has an overall Hawaiian character due to its laid-back, unhurried tempo and the use of rolled chords to imitate ukulele strums. The piece is in G Major with a ternary form. A left hand ostinato figure and chord inversions in the right hand serve as the building blocks of the outer sections (see Example 6), while the contrasting middle section features the whole-tone scale. As with Rollin's *Nocturne for the Left Hand*, Gillock's *Polynesian Nocturne* contains directions for *rubato*: "always lingering," "increase and accelerate," "retarding," and so on.



Ex. 6. William Gillock, "Polynesian Nocturne," mm. 1-6.

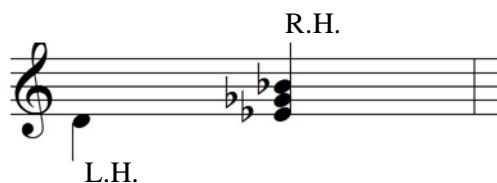
This piece has many attractive qualities, one of which is the use of the whole-tone scale, shown in Example 7. In addition to the whole-tone scale, the middle section features hand crossings, which look impressive to an audience. This nocturne also calls for the *una corda*, or soft pedal, with which the intermediate student is often intrigued.



Ex. 7. Gillock, "Polynesian Nocturne," mm. 47-50.

From a technical standpoint, the most difficult aspect of this piece is chord playing—both finding the chords and voicing. In order to play the chords in the right hand, the student must not get "stuck" in the keys. Instead, the student should be taught to release each chord. Furthermore, the student must voice towards the top note.

From a reading standpoint, the middle section is the most challenging, because of the numerous accidentals and hand crossings. Rote teaching is ideal for this section, which has very logical patterns that do not appear logical on the printed page; these patterns become clear when heard and experienced away from the printed music. Measures 41-46 could be taught using the pattern in Example 8, playing the pattern successively in different octaves. Likewise, the whole tone scale in measures 47-50 could be taught in a similar blocking pattern, shown in Example 9.



Ex. 8. Gillock, *Polynesian Nocturne*, Pattern for mm. 41-46.



Ex. 9. Gillock, *Polynesian Nocturne*, Pattern for mm. 47-50

From a pedagogical standpoint, this piece could be used to teach chords and inversions, as well as the technique of rolled chords. Also, this nocturne could introduce the whole-tone scale, the most overtly twentieth century aspect of this piece, to the student. The "nocturne style" aspects of the piece, including *rubato*, pedaling, and lyricism, are other pedagogical tools found in this nocturne.

#### Robert Vandall: *Summer Nocturne*

Pedagogical composer Robert Vandall has composed many nocturnes, including *Summer Nocturne*. This nocturne, like his *Winter Nocturne* and *Lydian Nocturne*, is in ternary form. Like the Chopin and Field nocturnes, *Summer Nocturne* calls for *rubato* and features an arpeggiated accompanimental pattern under a lyrical melody; this texture is shown in Example 10. The middle section contrasts this texture slightly by putting the arpeggiations in the right hand and octaves in the left hand.



Ex. 10. Robert Vandall, *Summer Nocturne*, mm. 1-4.

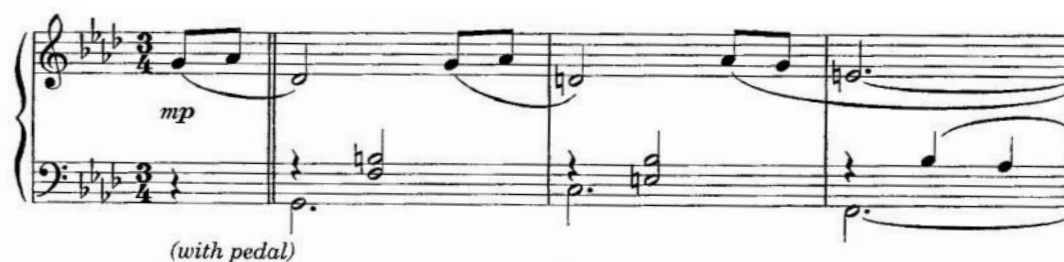
This nocturne is saved from monotony by a few harmonic surprises. The nocturne is in D-flat Major, so the E Major chord in measure 14 and the progression A-flat Major -

E Major - F-sharp seven - D major in measures 21-24 are unexpected. Overall, the piece is very tonal, perhaps too tonal for a twentieth century work. However, this nocturne may be appealing to the student who wants to play Chopin but is not yet ready.

### Dave Brubeck: *Nocturnes*

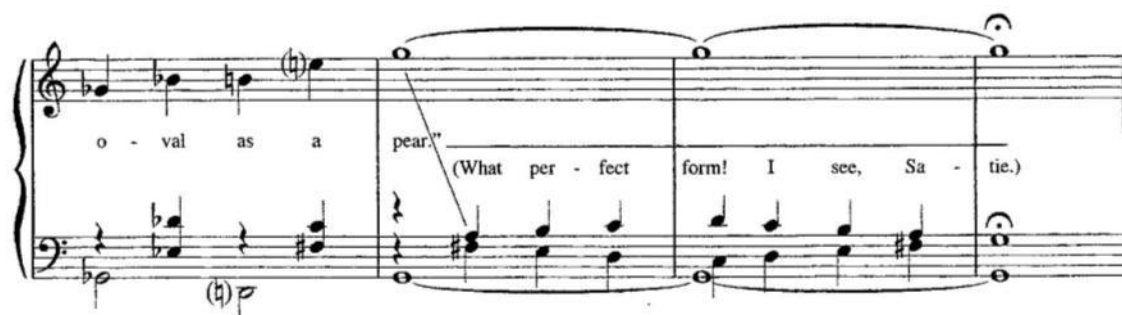
Dave Brubeck's *Nocturnes* is a collection of twenty-five separate pieces. Each piece has its own descriptive title, such as *Quiet as the Moon* or *Home Without Iola*. They range in difficulty, some on the same level as Gillock's *Polynesian Nocturne* and some at a late intermediate level. Although not all of them adhere to the "nocturne style"—melody plus accompanimental figure—they all conform to the concept of the nocturne as a "mood" piece. Only five of the twenty-five nocturnes, selected for their pedagogical value and appeal, will be discussed in detail.

Many nocturnes highlight a characteristic feature of a different genre. Likewise, *Lost Waltz (Edited Version)* is, as the title indicates, a waltz in F minor. This piece features a lyrical melody plus an accompanimental figure, the characteristic "boom-chuck" of a waltz (see Example 11). It is actually quite Chopinesque except for "wrong" notes that imbue it with a more contemporary sound. The "wrong"-note melody in the context of tonality gives it an appealing quality. Structurally, it is in two sections—AA', with the only difference between the two sections in their ending phrases.



Ex. 11. Dave Brubeck, *Lost Waltz (Edited Version)*, from *Nocturnes*, mm. 1-3.

*I See, Satie* is markedly different from Brubeck's other nocturnes. The composer includes an explanation of the piece geared toward the student. He states, "To me, it is how Satie's music may have sounded had he decided to become a twelve-tone composer."<sup>91</sup> The first four-bar phrase is a twelve-tone row, and the entire melody is made up of different tone rows, while the harmonization alludes to Satie's "Gymnopédies." The text of the last three bars refer to Satie's pear-shaped notation (see Example 12), which was Satie's response to music critics criticizing his music as not having any form.



Ex. 12. Brubeck, *I See Satie*, from *Nocturnes*, mm. 27-30.

This piece could be a fitting introduction to twelve-tone technique. The student can easily identify the notes of the row by labeling the melodic notes with Arabic numbers 1-12, as shown in Example 13. While the severe, stark dissonances characteristic of pieces using the twelve-tone technique can be a barrier for students, the tone rows in Brubeck's piece employ mostly consonant intervals, and therefore sounds less harsh but still strange. The accompanying lyrics also make the piece more accessible to the student.

<sup>91</sup> Brubeck. 18.

1 *legato* 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

When I sing a twelve-tone row, I

*p*

(with pedal)

9 10 11 12

al-ways think, "How strange. (Strange mu-sic.)"

Ex. 13. Brubeck, *I See Satie*, mm. 1-4.

The twelve-tone technique used to create the piece results in its biggest challenge—reading all the accidentals. Another challenge of the piece is the larger intervals in the left hand, which include rolled ninth interval and a leaping "boom-chuck" pattern. Practicing these patterns by increasing the distance between the leaps by an octave in makes the written pattern seem easier.

*Blue Lake Tahoe* is another waltz-like piece, however much slower than discussed *Lost Waltz*. The accompanimental pattern is also very similar to *Lost Waltz*, as shown in Example 14. This piece is in E minor, although there is extensive use of chromaticism that creates tonal ambiguity. Chromaticism is perhaps the most challenging aspect of this piece, but the accidentals will make sense to the student when read in context. The student should compare what precedes and follows the note with the accidental. Many times the difference is only a half step.

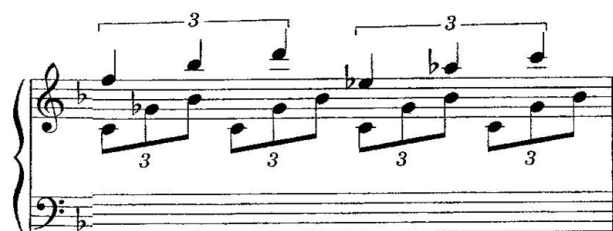


Ex. 14. Brubeck, *Blue Lake Tahoe*, from *Nocturnes*, mm. 5-8.

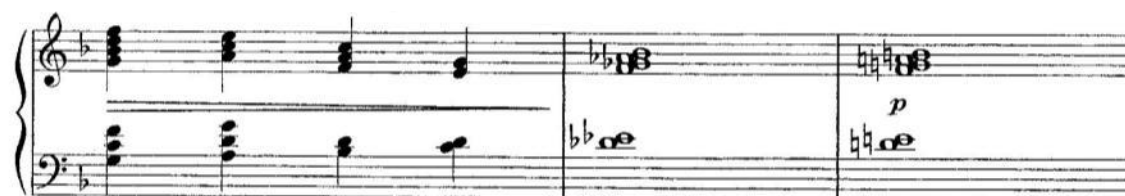
The expressive melody and chromatic harmonies are appealing, but the work's expressive nature, which makes it attractive, also makes it musically challenging. To achieve an expressive sound, the piece must be unhurried and relaxed; many students tend to generally play too fast. *Blue Lake Tahoe* also requires fine dynamic shading and phrasing, which could be developed through learning the piece. Students may find that describing the mood of the piece, adding appropriate lyrics, or creating an accompanying story will help with the interpretation. One of the most direct ways a teacher can influence the student is playing the piece for the student. It is especially effective to play the piece in a variety of ways and ask the student what was different and which was most effective. Of course, a combination of many different things will be needed to guide the student to a meaningful interpretation of the piece.

*Looking at a Rainbow* was likely named because of its resemblance to the "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows" tune, which in turn is taken from Chopin's *Fantasia-Improromptu*. It is slightly more difficult; its texture is thicker, a wider variety of rhythmic values is used, and the keyboard range is larger. One of the most appealing things about this piece is its distinct harmonic sound, which is created through the extensive use of seventh chords. The piece is constructed in four different sections. The first serves as an introduction, with longer rhythmic values and a more open texture. Clusters create an

interesting harmonic sound in these first eight bars. The next section features triplets, creating a 12/8 meter within the 4/4 time signature. Brubeck further complicates the rhythm by implying 6 beats per measure, as shown in Example 15. This section also moves into a higher keyboard range; both the right hand and left hand are notated in the upper staff for most of this section. Syncopation and thick, four-note chords are the main ideas of the third section, which uses eighth note values instead of triplets. Finally, the fourth section, like the first, uses slower note values and cluster harmonies (see Example 16).



Ex. 15. Brubeck, *Looking at a Rainbow*, from *Nocturnes*, m. 12.

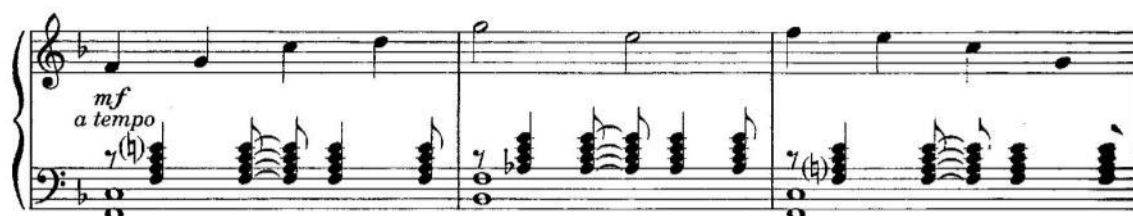


Ex. 16. Brubeck, *Looking at a Rainbow*, mm. 35-37.

Arguably the most important requirement of this piece is a strong internal pulse. Each section features a different rhythmic idea than the previous section, starting with quarter notes to triplets to eighth notes back to quarter notes. The quarter note pulse must remain relatively constant throughout the piece, although it does not need to be rigid, since Brubeck calls for *rubato* in this piece. Tapping the rhythm in each hand away from the piano is an effective exercise to master the rhythmic patterns. Because neither the

eighth note or triplet rhythmic values are constant, subdividing would not be very effective. Instead, adding words to rhythmic patterns could be used as a learning aid. For example, applying the system that Hazel Cobb developed, "pie" could represent a quarter note value, "app-le" for two eighths, and "straw-ber-ry" for a triplet.<sup>92</sup>

Depending on the student's hand size, another challenge for the intermediate student may be the full seventh chords in the third section, which are complicated by the leap that precedes each different chord (see Example 17). A key component of making this leap efficiently is using arc-shaped motions between keyboard areas. While making these arc motions, the student must learn to form the shape of the chord mid-air after playing the downbeat. As an exercise, the student should practice not only jumping from the open fifth downbeat up to the chord, but also from the chord back down to the open fifth. The student should use the same fingering for each of the seventh chords: 5-3-2-1.



Ex. 17. Brubeck, *Looking at a Rainbow*, mm. 17-19.

*Strange Meadowlark*, according to the composer, is based on the meadowlark call, which he heard often while growing up in Amador County, CA.<sup>93</sup> The piece is not particularly bird-like in sound, but it is exceptionally song-like. Like *I See, Satie*, this piece has lyrics, although it could be performed with or without singing. The piece is in ternary form. Outer sections are in E-flat Major and feature a blocked chord style of

<sup>92</sup> Hazel Cobb, *Rhythm: With Rhyme and Reason: Counting Made "Easy as Pie,"* (Mills Music Inc., 1947).

<sup>93</sup> Brubeck. 33.

accompaniment, shown in Example 18. The middle contrasting section is set in G Major and features a syncopated accompanimental style (see Example 19). The piece is homophonic, but the accompanying harmonies are not confined to the lower staff. The right hand contains both the melody and harmonic support, sometimes playing the melodic note simultaneously with three harmonic notes; this texture is shown in Example 18. Because of this, voicing is an issue for the student. As a practice exercise, the student could play the melodic line with the right hand and all supporting notes with the left hand, projecting the right hand while playing the left hand softer. This exercise in balance would train the student's ear to listen for the melody.

**Freely** §

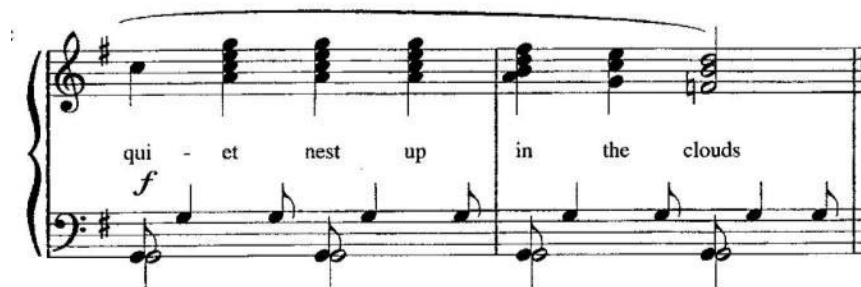
*mp*

What a strange mead-ow - lark, to be sing - ing, oh, so sweet - ly in the  
 sleep, mead-ow - lark? Is there noth - ing left but whis - tling in the

(with pedal)

park  
 dark,

Ex. 18. Brubeck, *Strange Meadowlark*, from *Nocturnes*, mm. 1-3.



Ex. 19. Brubeck, *Strange Meadowlark*, mm. 13-14.

Similar to the other nocturnes already discussed, this piece requires *rubato* playing, designated by the tempo indication "freely" and the frequent use of *fermati*. This piece also contains extended tertian harmonies and larger intervals. The plethora of seventh chords and nonfunctional harmony is probably why the title contains the word "strange." However, the harmonies are not particularly dissonant; they simply are not predictable.

#### Gian-Carlo Menotti: Nocturne (Notturmo), from *Poemetti*

Gian-Carlo Menotti's Nocturne (Notturmo), from *Poemetti*, features more traditional harmony in comparison to Brubeck's pieces. The ability level of Menotti's Nocturne fits between Brubeck's *Blue Lake Tahoe* and *Looking at a Rainbow*. Composed in ternary form, Menotti's piece opens in D Major, the B section is in A Major, and the A section returns in G Major before ending in D Major. The B section provides a contrast in both dynamic and thematic material. A barcarolle rhythmic pattern unifies the entire piece, another example of mixing another genre with the nocturne.

Like the model nocturnes of Field and Chopin, the main features of this piece are its lyrical melody and subdued tone. The left hand echoes the melody several times throughout the A sections; these passages are the most technically difficult of the piece. The first passage occurs in measures 3-4 and the second in measures 7-8; although these

two passages are similar, they would require different fingering. Measures 24-25 and 31 correspond to the first passage, while measures 28-29 correspond to the second. Efficient fingering is crucial in order for the intermediate student to perform these passages successfully. Suggestions for left-hand fingering are shown in Examples 20 and 21.



1 1 2 2 1 1 1 2 2 1  
2 4 5 5 3 2 4 5 5 3

Ex. 20. Gian-Carlo Menotti, Nocturne, from *Poemetti*, mm. 3-4.



1 1 2 1 2 2 1 1 1  
2 4 5 2 4 5 4 2 4

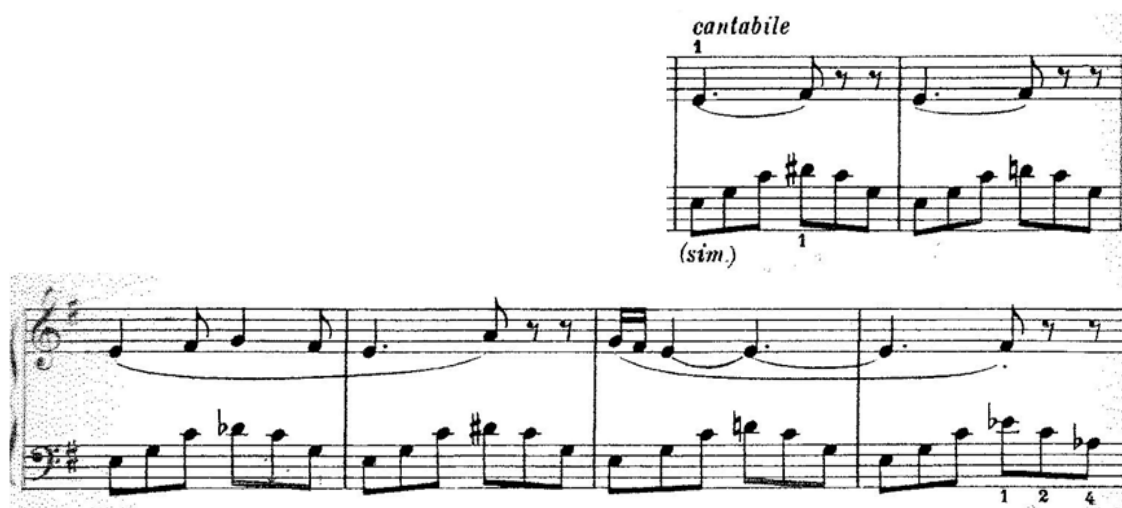
Ex. 21. Menotti, Nocturne, mm. 7-8.

### Béla Bartók: *Notturmo*, from *Mikrokosmos*

Béla Bartók's *Notturmo*, from Volume 4 of *Mikrokosmos*, is in 6/8 time like Menotti's Nocturne. Although Bartók's piece features the typical texture of arpeggiated accompanimental figure underneath a lyrical melody, it sounds markedly different from Field and Chopin nocturnes. The tonal center of E is not generated by functional

harmony, but through other means, including the repetition of E on the downbeat and cadences on E.

Unlike many of the nocturnes thus far studied, this piece is not in ternary form; instead Bartók's *Notturmo* is constructed from variations on the theme presented in measures 3-8, shown in Example 22. The first variation appears in measures 10-15, the second in measures 17-26, and the third in the bass part of measures 28-35.



Ex. 22. Béla Bartók, *Notturmo*, from *Mikrokosmos*, mm. 3-8.

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Even though Bartók's piece is not as technically difficult as Menotti's, it is quite challenging musically. Accidentals are rampant in this nocturne, reflecting a more dissonant harmony. The challenge for the intermediate student will be to make sense of the dissonances and "strange" harmonies. Other difficulties include the duplet cross-rhythms in measures 35-36 and the projection of the melody in the left hand, measures 28-37. The duplet rhythm becomes easier by observing the *rallentando*.

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Nocturne, from *A Little Piano Book*

Ralph Vaughan William's Nocturne, from *A Little Piano Book*, features his characteristic harmonic sound. This piece shows the generic "nocturne style" of arpeggiated accompanimental pattern plus lyrical melody, but Vaughan Williams imbues it with his own distinctive compositional language characterized by modal inflections. The key of the piece is not apparent at the beginning, since it opens with a pentatonic scale. The tonal center, A, is more obvious upon reaching the downbeat of measure 4, shown in Example 23. Parallel fifths (see measures 5-6 in Example 23) and mode changes (see measure 7 in Example 23) also serve to create Vaughan Williams's personal harmonic language.



Ex. 23. Ralph Vaughan Williams, Nocturne, from *A Little Piano Book*, mm. 3-7.  
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The nocturne is in ternary form, with an abbreviated return of the opening A section—thus, ABA'. The challenges of this nocturne include efficient left hand fingering, the trill-like passage, and the passage in measure 10, which will be discussed below. As

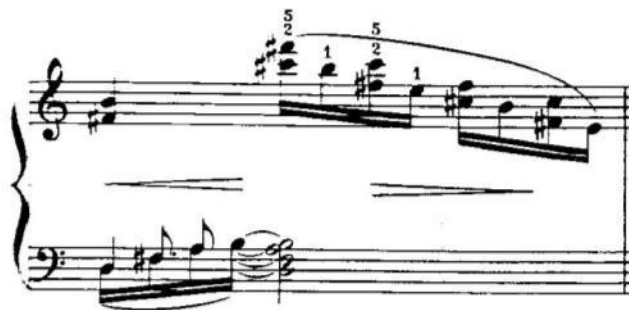
with any piece, key fingering numbers should be written in, with same fingering used for similar passages.

The trill-like passage in measure 8 (see Example 24) is reminiscent of a bird call, which brings to mind Bartók's *Musique Nocturnes* from the *Out of Doors* suite. The trill figure in this nocturne could be used effectively as an introduction to trilling. By extracting the trill figure and creating an exercise, the student would learn the technique to apply to future repertoire. Important things to remember for executing the trill include a slight forearm rotation, fingers close to the keys, and preventing the hammers from falling completely down between notes.



Ex. 24. Vaughan Williams, Nocturne, m. 8.  
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The passage in measure 10 (see Example 25) is the most technically challenging of the piece, but it looks more difficult on the page than it truly is. This passage would benefit from rote teaching; by focusing on the pattern on the keyboard and the motion used to achieve it, the student will learn the aural and kinesthetic cues before the visual.



Ex. 25. Vaughan Williams, Nocturne, m. 10.

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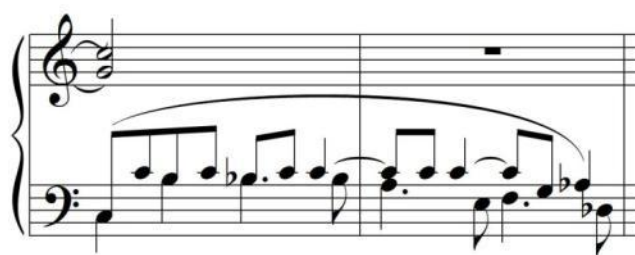
Norman Dello Joio: *Night Song*, from *Lyric Pieces for the Young*

Dello Joio's *Night Song*, from *Lyric Pieces for the Young*, is not as immediately appealing and accessible as most of the other nocturnes already discussed, probably because it seems to fit the idea of the *Nachtstück* rather than the nocturne. Instead of creating a calm, tranquil mood, *Night Song* emphasizes the uncertainty and eeriness of the night, which is communicated through dissonances and syncopations. Nevertheless, it bears similarities to the other nocturnes, such as its overall subdued and *cantabile* character.

*Night Song* is freely tonal, with its ending in C Major coming as a surprise after all the chromaticism. The numerous accidentals are one challenge presented by the piece. The form, like the tonality, is loose; it could be described as a type of variation form, with the first two measures serving as an introduction. Measures 3-7, 14-19, 30-36, and 45-50 are the refrains, with Variation 1 appearing in measures 8-13, Variation 2 in measures 20-29, and Variation 3 in measures 37-44.

Each of the variations is made over a left hand ostinato figure introduced in measures 6-7 (see Example 26). The student should note where in the piece the ostinato

figure drops out and where it returns. There are a number of reasons the student would benefit from starting out by learning the ostinato figure: first, the ostinato figure accounts for much of the left hand; second, the figure consists of a steady eighth note pulse. If the student internalizes this pulse from the beginning, the rhythmic challenges of the piece, such as the syncopated rhythm in measure 14 shown in Example 27, are more likely to be met with success.



Ex. 26. Norman Dello Joio, *Night Song*, from *Lyric Pieces for the Young*, mm. 6-7.



Ex. 27. Dello Joio, *Night Song*, m. 14.

For young students interested in composing, this is an excellent piece to analyze in order to learn how music is put together. The building blocks of the entire piece are found in the refrain, with measures 3-4, shown in Example 28, containing the germ from which the piece develops. The ascending line in the right hand provides the melodic structure for each of the ensuing variations, while the descending bass line provides the basic outline for the ostinato figure.



Ex. 28. Dello Joio, *Night Song*, mm. 3-4.

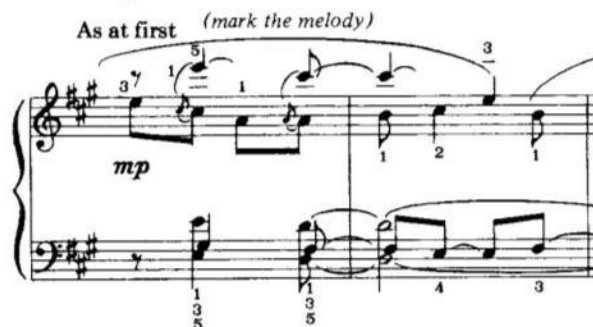
Aaron Copland: *Midsummer Nocturne*

The mood of Aaron Copland's "Midsummer Nocturne," as described by the composer, is slow, poetic, and thoughtful. Like many of the other nocturnes, this calm piece is in ternary form. The A section, measures 1-20, has two parallel section: measures 1-10 and the pick-up to measures 11-20. The second section is nearly a repeat of the first. The succinct B section, pick-up to measure 11 to measure 28, provides strong dynamic contrast to the outer sections. The return of the A material, pick-up to measure 29 to measure 40, is a shortened, embellished variant of the original A section; Example 29, shows the first two bars of the original A section, while Example 30 shows the embellished variant. Although this nocturne features the typical ternary form, its texture is atypical, since it does not feature the melody over arpeggiations.



Ex. 29. Aaron Copland, *Midsummer Nocturne*, mm. 1-2.

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Ex. 30. Copland, *Midsummer Nocturne*, mm. 29-30.

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In true Copland fashion, the harmonic characteristics of this work include open intervals and parallel fifths. The entire piece is diatonic in A Major, without a single accidental. The harmonic simplicity is compensated for by the many subtle rhythmic difficulties, which include mixed meter, beat displacement caused by ties across the bars, and phrases starting on off beats (see Example 31). The piece is also rhythmically more difficult because of its rhythmic freedom and *rubato* playing; the latter is indicated by Copland's indications as to where to push the tempo and where to stretch it.



Ex. 31. Copland, *Midsummer Nocturne*, mm. 4-8.

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Besides the need for a fine sense of rhythmic timing and freedom, voicing is also a challenge, especially in the A' section, where the performer is required to play the melody almost simultaneously with a note a tenth higher. The student should take care to project the melodic note with the right hand before immediately leaping up to the higher note, which should be played softer than the melodic note. Because of these challenges in the A' section, this nocturne could be assigned to a student as a study in voicing.

Benjamin Britten: Nocturne, from *Sonatina Romantica*

Benjamin Britten's Nocturne, from his *Sonatina Romantica*, is in C Major and ABA'B' form. The middle section begins in B-flat Major and modulates through several keys before returning to B-flat Major for the return of the opening material. This nocturne features a beautiful, lyrical melody set to an arpeggiated accompaniment, shown in Example 32. The contrasting middle section, which returns very briefly at the end as B', is chorale-like and harmonically interesting. Britten's nocturne is especially lovely with much emotional appeal; the opening and closing are subdued while the initial return of the beginning material is more passionate.



Ex. 32. Benjamin Britten, Nocturne, from *Sonatina Romantica*, mm. 8-11.  
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This nocturne requires an octave span in the right hand as well as larger spans in the left hand, as seen in Example 33. However, the student must be wary of trying to

maintain a stretched hand position to cover all the notes. Instead, the student should use the arm to aid with the wide intervals and keep the hand as relaxed as possible. Some extension of the hand will be required, but should be immediately followed by the contracting, or collecting, of the hand.



Ex. 33. Britten, Nocturne, mm. 30-31.

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In addition to the larger hand span, this piece requires the student to read using two treble clefs and numerous ledger lines in the middle section (see Example 34). The middle section also requires more careful counting in 6/8. Additionally, the middle contains copious accidentals, which becomes obvious through an analysis of the chord structure: B-flat Major - A-flat Major - D-flat Major - A Major - D Major - G Major - E Major - F Major - D-flat Major.



Ex. 34. Britten, Nocturne, mm. 27-29.

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### Michael Valenti: 10 Nocturnes for Piano

Michael Valenti has composed ten nocturnes for piano. As mentioned in Chapter II, Valenti is a Broadway composer, and that influence is apparent in his nocturnes, which employ a contemporary-tinged Romantic harmonic language. These nocturnes would be especially appropriate for students interested in Musical Theatre or jazz. The technical level of the nocturnes ranges from late intermediate to advanced. Valenti clearly follows the model set forth by Field and Chopin, with Nocturne No. 6 even subtitled "Chopinesque." Each of the nocturnes bears the typical texture of singing melody plus accompaniment, as well as other features, including rhythmic freedom, ternary forms, and tranquil openings and endings. The easiest, and briefest, of the collection are numbers 5 and 10.

Nocturne No. 5 is in D Major. As the Italian directions indicate, the piece is simple, sweet, and tranquil. This nocturne requires a larger right hand span in order to play an octave with notes in between. There are also several rolled chords, the largest spanning an eleventh. Since the left hand is written in an arpeggiated style, a large hand span is not necessary.

This nocturne is in binary form: the A section, measures 1-9, cadences in D Major; the B section, measures 10-18, begins in G minor and cadences in D Major, while measure 15 recalls the first measure. Harmonic analysis (see Example 35 as an excerpt of harmonic analysis) reveals Valenti's indebtedness to Broadway compositional style with its reliance on seventh chords.

simply

*p*

*poco rall.*

Gm C<sup>M7</sup> F B<sup>b</sup>M7 E<sup>Ø7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> D

Ex. 35. Michael Valenti, Nocturne No. 5, mm. 10-13.

Like Nocturne No. 5, Nocturne No. 10 contains many examples of seventh chords. In D-flat Major, the tenth Nocturne features a simple, sweet melody. The opening eight bars, consisting of two four-bar phrases ending in a half cadence, create a parallel period with the next eight bars, which end in a perfect authentic cadence. This opening section comprises the A section. The B section begins in measure 17 and shares the structure of the A section. A shortened version of the A section begins in measure 39, resulting in an overall form of ABAB'A'.

Nocturne No. 10's B section features a similar arpeggiated accompanimental pattern to the left hand of Nocturne No. 5 (see Example 36). In both cases, careful fingering and attention to the expanding and collecting of the hand are keys to efficient playing. An easy flow in the left hand is crucial for the mood of this piece, which must be played in a fluid and simple manner. Legato, or syncopated pedaling, should also be used in both nocturnes, particularly in Nocturne No. 10, where the student must listen carefully to ensure the bass note resonates in the pedal.



Ex. 36. Valenti, Nocturne No. 10, mm. 17-20.

### Early Advanced Nocturnes

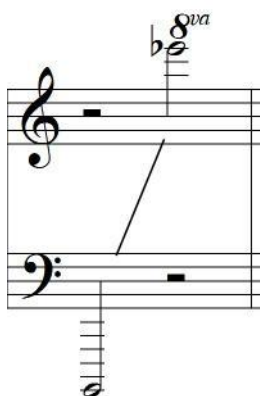
Peter Sculthorpe: *Night Pieces*

Peter Sculthorpe's *Night Pieces* consists of three pieces. The first, *Snow, Moon and Flowers* is divided into three sections—one section for each of the words. The second piece is titled *Night*, and the third is *Stars*. Each piece is atonal, but not harshly so. Sculthorpe uses consonant intervals or arranges the tones in a manner to lessen the effect of the dissonance. His predominate method of using melodic intervals rather than harmonic intervals also takes the edge off of the dissonance.

Other than its subdued mood and sense of rhythmic freedom, *Night Pieces* does not bear any resemblance to the Field and Chopin nocturnes, but these pieces are more closely related to the *Nachtstück*. Creating a wash of sound is the primary goal here, rather than lyricism. In terms of mood and character, this set is also similar to Bartók's *Musiques Nocturnes* and George Crumb's *Ghost Nocturne for the Druids of Stonehenge*.

As a set, each piece is progressively more challenging. The first piece and its first section are the easiest. "Snow" could be played almost entirely with one hand, since most of it consists of a single note at a time. In fact, the first six measures consist of the same notes, with the changing accent placement providing the only challenge. Like the other nocturnes already discussed, the piece is subdued, expressive, and features rhythmic freedom.

"Moon," the second part of the first piece, also unfolds mostly one note at a time. Like "Snow," it features subdued dynamics and rhythmic freedom. In contrast to "Snow," "Moon" uses the extreme ranges of the keyboard (shown in Example 37), as well as more variety in rhythmic values.



Ex. 37. Keyboard range of "Moon," from *Night Pieces*.

"Flowers," the final section of the first piece, is the most difficult of the three. It contains the same features as the previous two—mostly single notes at a time and rhythmic variety and freedom. "Flowers" also includes a glissando on the black keys in the final measure, which will likely engage the student's interest. Unlike "Snow" and "Moon" which were in free form, "Flowers" is in ternary form. Like "Moon," "Flowers" also uses extreme ranges of the keyboard, seen in Example 38.



Ex. 38. Keyboard range in "Flowers," from *Night Pieces*.

The most challenging aspect of *Snow, Moon and Flowers* is its rhythm. Each of the three parts features mixed meter, and the piece as a whole includes a wide variety of rhythmic values. "Snow" is the easiest; it uses only eighth notes. "Moon" employs eighths and sixteenths. "Flowers" uses dotted eighths, eighths, sixteenths, and thirty-seconds; Examples 39 and 40 show two of the main rhythmic patterns in "Flowers." Learning the rhythm correctly from the very beginning of practice is particularly critical to the student's success in "Flowers."



Ex. 39. Rhythmic pattern from "Flowers," from *Night Pieces*.

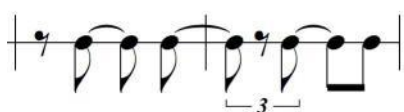


Ex. 40. Rhythmic pattern from "Flowers," from *Night Pieces*.

Each of the three parts of *Snow, Moon and Flowers* should be learned using a subdivision of the eighth note. Extracting the rhythmic patterns used and creating flashcards of those patterns can make learning the rhythm more fun. A variety of games could be played with the flashcards; for example, the teacher could lay out three different flashcards, clap one of the rhythms, and have the student decide which rhythm was clapped. The roles could also be reversed so that the student claps and the teacher chooses which pattern was clapped. For an easier exercise, do a "scavenger hunt" for the rhythm; have the student find the corresponding flashcard rhythm patterns in the music. Since the same patterns are used multiple times, the student should be able to find each occurrence of the pattern. Furthermore, each rhythmic pattern could be labeled with a

number or color, which the student could use to mark the corresponding pattern in the music.

The second piece, *Night*, is also rhythmically challenging, with ties and triplets (see Example 41) responsible for the rhythmic difficulties. The composer indicates that the eighth note should equal c. 56, indicating a very slow tempo for the piece, making it harder to correctly play the triplet over two counts. To make learning the rhythm easier, quarter notes equal to c. 56 should be counted, making the piece twice as fast as the performance tempo, making the triplets much easier. The student could use words to aid the learning process, such as "du-ple" or "app-le" for the eighth note patterns and "tri-plet" or "straw-ber-ry" for the triplet note patterns.

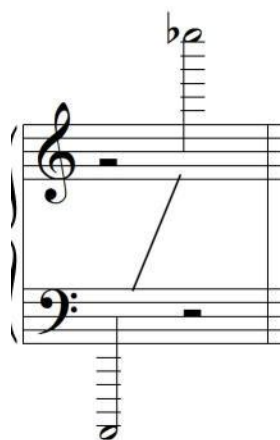


Ex. 41. Sculthorpe, *Night*, from *Night Pieces*.

Besides its rhythmic challenges, *Night* is also difficult from a standpoint of reading, requiring the student to read three staves at a time; one more than the usual two. However, its pointillistic texture makes reading it less difficult than if each stave had a more continuous line.

Sculthorpe gives some direction on how to divide the notes between the hands by labeling right hand notes with "R.H." and left hand notes with "L.H.," except for the first measure, where notes with upward stems should be played with the right hand and notes with downward stems with the left hand. This same distribution should be observed in similar measures, such as measure 7.

*Stars*, the final piece in the set, features ternary form and nearly continuous sixteenth notes, which makes the rhythm less challenging than the previous pieces. Numerous accidentals, leaps, clef changes, a quicker tempo, and extreme keyboard ranges, shown in Example 42, make this the most challenging piece in the set. Like "Snow," *Stars* uses the same notes but with changed accents. The leaps are closely related to the clef changes and often involve hand crossings, which are indicated in the score. The first nineteen measures are all notated in the treble clef. Beginning in measure 20, the student must pay close attention to the numerous clef changes in the lower staff.



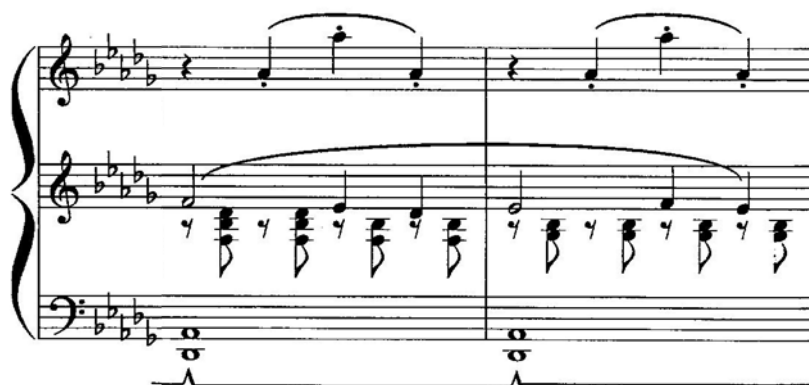
Ex. 42. Keyboard range of *Stars*, from *Night Pieces*.

The extreme keyboard ranges of all three pieces in the set make *Night Pieces* challenging both from a reading and musical standpoint. The student will likely need to label the extreme notes to ease reading difficulties. Musically, the extreme ranges make the pieces sound disjointed. The challenge for the student is to make sense of the notes in order to communicate the music effectively. Consequently, *Night Pieces* requires a mature, musically-gifted student. When presenting this set to a student, it is crucial that the teacher perform the pieces in a musically convincing way; otherwise, the student will not be excited about this unusual music.

### William Gillock: Nocturne

Like Sculthorpe's *Night*, William Gillock's Nocturne is composed using three staves. However, reading Gillock's Nocturne is slightly more difficult because each of the lines is more active. In the key of D-flat Major, Gillock's Nocturne is tonal, making it musically easier than Sculthorpe's, because of its more predictable harmony. Gillock's Nocturne is closely related to the Field/Chopin model, with its subdued, *cantabile* melody over an accompanimental pattern.

This nocturne consists of four different layers: melody, which is contained in the upper part of the middle staff; a bass drone of mostly open fifths; a blocked chord accompaniment in the middle staff; and a treble bell-like figure in the top staff, mostly in octaves. These four layers can be identified in Example 43. The left hand plays notes in the outer staves, while the right hand plays those in the middle staff, resulting in the left hand crossing over the right hand in every measure.



Ex. 43. William Gillock, Nocturne, mm. 7-8.

Rhythmically, the piece is not very challenging. The most difficult aspect of the piece is to project the melody, which is hidden between all the other layers. Students could benefit from practicing the middle staff alone, splitting the parts between the hands,

projecting the melody in the right hand while lightly playing the blocked chords in the left hand. The melody should be legato, while the chords should be detached. While practicing in this manner, students must listen carefully for the melody, shaping it beautifully. Next, the student should practice the middle staff alone with the right hand playing both parts, listening attentively to make sure the melody is still being projected and shaped. After the student has achieved this, add the bass part and then the upper part.

Even though this nocturne is not as musically interesting, many students will likely find it more accessible and appealing than Sculthorpe's *Night Pieces*. In contrast to Sculthorpe's pieces, this nocturne is lovely and tonal. The bell effects give it a charming quality, and the hand crossings look impressive. This nocturne could also serve as an introduction to reading in three staves.

#### Alexandre Tansman: *Quatre Nocturnes*

Alexandre Tansman's *Quatre Nocturnes* consists of four brief nocturnes, of which the first and fourth are the most accessible. All four nocturnes use subdued dynamics: *pianississimo* - *piano*. Numbers one, two and four are based on quartal harmony, while number three uses triadic harmony. Tansman does not rely on functional tonal harmony for any of the four nocturnes. These nocturnes do not emphasize the typical "nocturne style" of lyrical melody over arpeggiated bass, but instead reflect the idea of a "mood" piece similar to Brubeck's *Nocturnes*.

The first nocturne, marked Moderato, is in rounded binary form, with the A section comprising the first thirteen measures, and the B section comprising the last fifteen measures (mm. 14-28). This nocturne's tonal center, C-sharp, is generated by pedal tones on C-sharp. As mentioned previously, the fourth interval plays an important

role in the harmony, particularly in the B section. The interval of a second is also notable throughout the piece. Tansman's sole use of triadic harmony begins in measure 8 and continues through the downbeat of measure 10, as shown in Example 44.



Ex. 44. Alexandre Tansman, Nocturne No. 1, from *Quatre Nocturnes*, mm. 8-10.  
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This excerpt also features planing of triads and seventh chords. The right hand employs both major and minor triads, while the left hand uses dominant-sounding seventh chords. This passage is the most technically difficult of the piece. The student should analyze the chords in this section, identifying the roots and quality of each chord. When practicing the passage, the student must maintain the same hand shape for all the chords. Also, it is important that the student voice towards the top note, and rely on the pedal to create a legato sound..

Although this nocturne is not as immediately melodic as many of the others already discussed, the composer indicates that it should be played in a lyrical manner. The composer gives clear, specific phrase markings, as well as commas, or breath marks. Therefore, despite only one dynamic shading marking—a *diminuendo* in measures 8-9—each phrase should utilize dynamic shading to create a beautiful shape.

The second nocturne, also marked Moderato, is in ternary form. The middle section features notation using three staves, making this nocturne the most difficult to read. The use of three staves here was likely influenced by Bartók's *Musiques Nocturnes*,

which also employs three staves. Like the first nocturne, the second nocturne's primary harmonic building blocks are intervals of the second and fourth. This nocturne also frequently uses harmonic ninths, often with a note inserted between, requiring a larger hand span in both hands to successfully play this piece.

Another Moderato piece, the third nocturne uses the most triadically-based harmony of the four nocturnes. The third nocturne's characteristic feature is its consistent instigation of the melodic idea on the "and" of beat one. It is important that the student not accent these beginnings, creating false downbeats. One of the challenges of this piece is the vast amount of accidentals, which result in an overall tonality of E major, despite the lack of sharps the key signature. The student should find the accidentals that are consistent throughout the piece—F-sharp, C-sharp, G-sharp, and D-sharp—in order to realize the key of E Major, and thus ease the difficulties of reading all the accidentals.

Although Nocturne No. 4, marked Lento, is in a slower overall tempo than the other three nocturnes, it utilizes shorter note values to seem quicker. This nocturne features minor seconds and fourths in quartal harmony that is especially apparent towards the end; see the high quantity of fourth intervals in the right hand of Example 45. Like the first nocturne, the fourth establishes its tonal center, D, through pedal tones consistently sounding the lowest note on every beat.



Ex. 45. Tansman, Nocturne No. 4, from *Quatre Nocturnes*, m. 10.  
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Since this nocturne is supposed to be slower but has quicker note values, the student should subdivide using eighth notes. Setting the metronome to 120-126 for the eighth notes may aid the student in learning the rhythm. Besides meticulous counting, careful fingering for the chromatic scale passages is also crucial. Two ways to successfully play these passages are shown by the fingering suggestions in Example 46.

3 1 3 1 2 5 4 3  
2 3 4 1 2 5 4 3



Ex. 46. Tansman, Nocturne No. 4, m. 1.  
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The fourth nocturne also contains *portati*, shown in Example 47, with which the student may not have any prior experience. A *portato* is indicated by a dot combined with a curved line over or under the note. In *The Pianist's Dictionary*, Maurice Hinson describes it as playing in between *legato* and *staccato*.<sup>94</sup> In contrast, Joan Last, in her

<sup>94</sup> Maurice Hinson, *The Pianist's Dictionary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 139.

book *Interpretation for the Piano Student*, describes the combination of dot and slur as a mezzo-staccato.<sup>95</sup> Last identifies two different ways to realize the marking: shorten the notes to create space between them; or deploy the pedal and use a *staccato* articulation, which results in a more specific sound than *legato* playing with the pedal. In this nocturne, the *portato*, or mezzo-staccato, marking is over passages of quicker notes, making Last's first option unfeasible. The second option, playing *staccato* with the damper pedal down, would be the more effective means of interpreting the *portati* in this context.



Ex. 47. Tansman, Nocturne No. 4, m. 8.

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According to Tansman's indications in the score, performing *Quatre Nocturnes* as a set would take about six minutes. In terms of technique, as a whole, the nocturnes require a hand span of at least a ninth. They also require a conscientious student who would carefully observe all the accidentals and precise rhythmic markings. A student who is fascinated by the more dissonant sounds of the twentieth century idiom is more likely to be drawn to these pieces than others. These nocturnes could be used in the studio to explore quartal harmony.

<sup>95</sup> Joan Last, *Interpretation for the Piano Student* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 30.

### Erik Satie: *Cinq Nocturnes*

In contrast to Tansman's nocturnes, Satie's *Cinq Nocturnes* are more accessible both to the student and general audience. Satie composed all five nocturnes in 1919; the first was composed in August, the second in September, the third and fourth in October, and the fifth in November. The first three are all in D Major, while the fourth is in A Major and the fifth in F Major.

The Nocturnes share many characteristics: all five are in 12/8 meter; each of them share the same general texture of lyrical melody in the right hand over arpeggiated accompaniment in the left hand; all five are in ternary form with a contrasting middle section, each of which is set in a contrasting key and uses a different, often more chorale-like, texture. These nocturnes also feature rhythmic freedom, indicated in the score by tempo changes. Planing is also a common texture shared by the five nocturnes, as well as an overall sweet, calm character.

The *Premier Nocturne* is to be played sweetly and calmly, as indicated by the composer. Even though the beginning key signature indicates D Major, the harmonic language is not that simple. Satie's compositional style highlights parallel fourths and fifths (see Example 48). Parallelism, or planing, of second-inversion triads is featured in measure 6 (see Example 49).



Ex. 48. Erik Satie, *Premier Nocturne*, mm. 1-3.



Ex. 49. Satie, *Premier Nocturne*, m. 6.

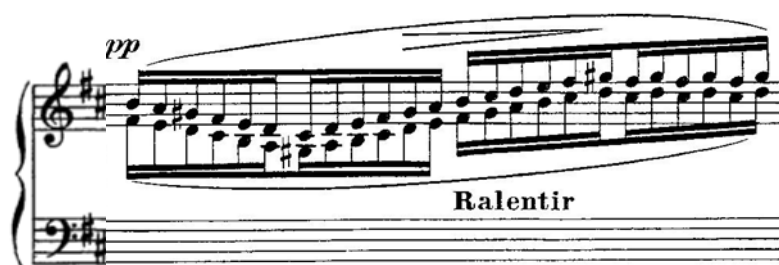
This nocturne's primary challenges are voicing and phrasing. Because the melodic notes are longer than the accompaniment and spaced apart, the challenge is to keep them connected through the phrase. Moreover, because of the percussive nature of the piano, this nocturne must not be played too slowly. The student could also practice this piece while singing the melody, matching vocal quality and phrasing on the piano.

The middle section of the first nocturne provides contrast in dynamics, key and texture; it is louder, more chromatic and features chorale-like writing, as well as *portati*, or mezzo-staccato, which were previously discussed in relation to Tansman's fourth nocturne. However, Satie indicates a mezzo-staccato using a dash and dot, as shown in Example 50. In this case, the marking should be interpreted by inserting space between the chords, resulting in a slight holding back of the tempo, which will highlight the grand character of this passage.



Ex. 50. Satie, *Premier Nocturne*, mm. 20-21.

The *Deuxieme Nocturne* also features mezzo-staccato in its middle section. This nocturne has a modified ternary form in which the return of the A section is considerably shortened. Like the first nocturne, the A sections are indicated as D Major, even though the harmonic language does not particularly reflect the major mode. The melody of this nocturne is not as memorable as that of the first. In addition, the left hand is more challenging as it does not lie under the hand as naturally; efficient fingering will be essential to success. Conscientious fingering will also be important for the passage of parallel fourths in measure 8, shown in Example 51. This passage could be divided between the hands, each hand playing an A Major scale; suggested fingering for the A Major scale is shown in Example 52.



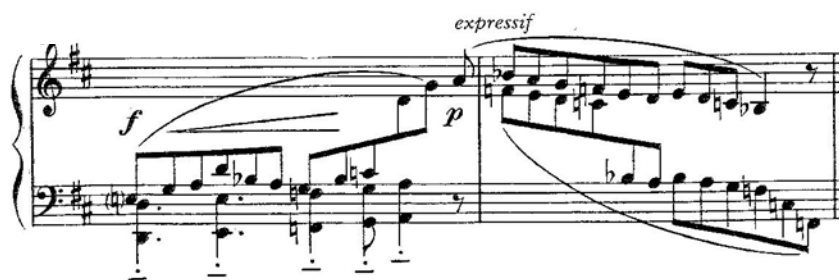
Ex. 51. Satie, *Deuxieme Nocturne*, m. 8.



Ex. 52. A Major Scale fingering. Right hand fingering is written above the notes; left hand fingering is written below the notes.

The *Troisième Nocturne* features a similar passage of parallel fourths (see Example 53). Unlike the other nocturnes, the third nocturne ends loudly with a *fortissimo* dynamic followed by a *crescendo*. Moreover, this nocturne has more forward motion due

to its quicker tempo. Phrasing is easier in this nocturne compared to the second nocturne, and the melody is more memorable.



Ex. 53. Satie, *Troisième Nocturne*, mm. 7-8.

As with the other nocturnes, the third features a contrasting middle section; the B section changes meter to a duple, 4/4, from compound, 12/8, meter. In addition, the tempo slows and C-sharp is dropped from the key signature. Compared to the A section, this section is calmer and, as the score indicates, mysterious. The texture is also thicker through this section, raising the issue of balance between the parts. This is especially challenging because the melody is not contained solely in the upper part. At the beginning of the B section, measure 17, the melody is in the left hand, while in measure 19 it switches to the upper part, indicated by the *chanté* marking. In measure 21, the melody is again in the left hand.

The *Quatrième Nocturne* features parallel fifths in the upper part of the A sections. The beginning idea, measures 1-4, shown in Example 54, is embellished and varied in its subsequent appearances, also typical in the nocturnes of Chopin. At its second appearance in measures 9-12 (see Example 55), ornamental figures between the upper notes are added. Satie varies it again slightly at the end in measures 17-20 (see Example 56) by taking it up the octave and adding the octave interval to the right hand.

(♩ = 92)

*p*

*mystérieux et tendre.*

*pp*

*caressant.*

Ex. 54. Satie, Quatrième Nocturne, mm. 1-5.

*p*

*mf*

*REPRENDRE*

*Ralentir.*

*ATTENDRE.*

*p*

Ex. 55. Satie, Quatrième Nocturne, mm. 9-12.



Ex. 56. Satie, *Quatrième Nocturne*, mm. 17-20.

As with the other nocturnes, the arpeggiations in the left hand are somewhat convoluted and will require careful, consistent fingering. This nocturne also uses the mezzo-staccato indications (see Example 56). Satie marks this section *lointain*, which means it should sound distant or from afar. In this case, the performer should play the right hand using a *staccato* articulation while using the damper pedal.

The *Cinquième Nocturne* likewise requires careful, consistent fingering, especially since the left hand is more chromatic than in the other four nocturnes; note the left hand in Example 57. Unlike the other nocturnes, the fifth employs more thirds than fourths or fifths. The form is nearly identical to the fourth; with the beginning idea varied in a similar manner.



Ex. 57. Satie, *Cinquième Nocturne*, mm.1-2.

Of the five Nocturnes, numbers 1, 3 and 4 are the most attractive, with memorable melodies and the most contrast between the A and B sections. The performer is not required to play the 5 Nocturnes as a set; in fact the fourth and fifth were originally published separately from the first three. They are also available individually, so the student does not have to buy all five in order to just play one. As pedagogical tools, these nocturnes could be used as exercises in phrasing, balance, and voicing. These nocturnes could also serve as teaching tools for learning efficient fingering for the often convoluted left hand.

#### Gustav Holst: Nocturne

Gustav Holst's Nocturne employs a modified arch form—ABA'B'A". The A sections feature parallel fifths in the left hand melody, while the right hand is given an accompanimental octave figure (see Example 58), making the right hand technically more difficult than the left. The indicated quarter note = 60 tempo is problematic musically; at this tempo, the right hand sounds disjunct. The right hand should be given a shimmering effect, which can be achieved through a faster tempo—quarter note = c. 72.



Ex. 58. Gustav Holst, Nocturne, mm. 1-2.

The B sections are faster, marked *Animato*. The melody remains in the left hand, but is now marked *staccato* (see Example 59). While the entire A section is to be played with pedal, passages in the B section are marked either with pedal or without pedal. The B section also features more dramatic changes in dynamics. Contrasts in the piece, both between the A and B sections and within the B section, are the most appealing feature of the piece.



Ex. 59. Holst, Nocturne, mm. 12-14.

### Advanced Nocturnes

#### George Rochberg: Nocturne

George Rochberg's Nocturne is the tenth piece in *Partita Variations*. It is one of the tonal pieces in that work and directly quotes the theme, which is the unnumbered piece in the set. Rochberg's Nocturne is in E-flat Major and ternary form, and imitates both the melodic and harmonic model of Chopin's Nocturnes, which makes it markedly different from his earlier, atonal style. Key elements of Rochberg's Nocturne include lyricism, ornamental figures and trills, and rhythmic freedom. Lyricism is evident from

the first measure (see Example 60); the melody here could easily be vocalized. The turn is an integral part of the melody, which features a more sophisticated ornamental figure in measure 5 (shown in Example 61), as a variation of the first measure. Trills beginning on the main note are found in measure 4 (see Example 62), as well as throughout the reprise, measures 25-37. The trill in the left hand of the reprise is nearly continuous, calling to mind the last Beethoven Piano Sonatas (see Example 63 and Example 64).



Ex. 60. George Rochberg, Nocturne, from *Partita Variations*, m. 1.  
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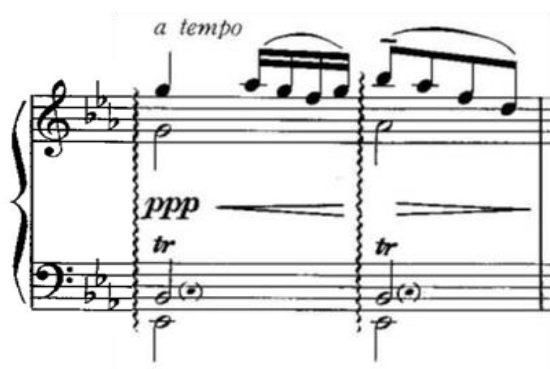


Ex. 61. Rochberg, Nocturne, m. 5.  
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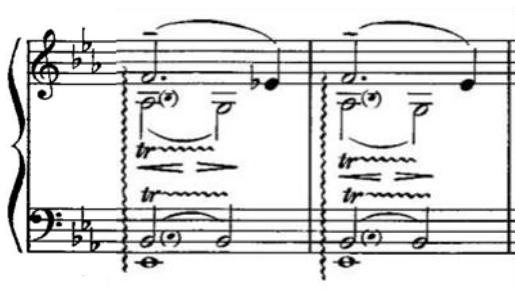
Ex. 62. Rochberg, Nocturne, m. 4.

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Ex. 63. Rochberg, Nocturne, m. 25.

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Ex. 64. Rochberg, Nocturne, m. 34-35.

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Besides the trills, the most difficult part is the B section, which juxtaposes eighth notes in the right hand against triplets in the left hand (see Example 65). The downbeat is missing in every other measure, from 18-22, which makes the rhythm even more problematic. This entire section should gradually become more intense and passionate,

which means the rhythm must be fluid, not robotic or stodgy. Practicing away from the piano could help the student with this section; this type of practice may include hearing the piece mentally, thinking of how it should ideally sound. It could also involve tapping the rhythm in each hand or "playing" the notes on a flat surface, like a table. Practicing away from the piano also includes listening to recordings of the piece; the student may benefit greatly from conducting the recording. Using all of these methods of practice incorporates all three learning modes—aural, kinesthetic, and visual—without the student having to focus on playing the correct notes on the keyboard.



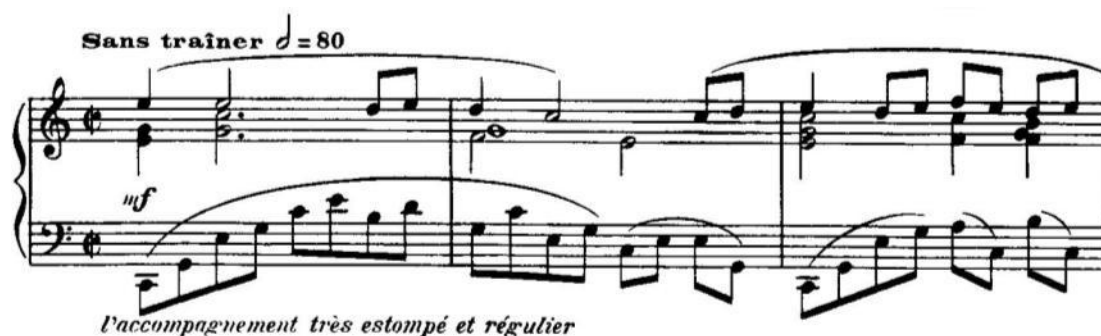
Ex. 65. Rochberg, Nocturne, mm. 18-19.  
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#### Francis Poulenc: *Nocturnes pour Piano*

Francis Poulenc's set of Nocturnes includes eight individual pieces. In general, these pieces are in arch form, melodically oriented, and concise. With the exception of the first nocturne, each begins and ends with softer dynamics. Poulenc's harmonic language in these nocturnes includes both extended tertian harmony and planing. Generally, he uses functional diatonic harmony in combination with numerous free modulations; sections of stable harmony are interspersed with sections of less conventional harmony.

Even though Poulenc's Nocturnes are rarely performed as a set, they are actually cyclic; the ending of the First Nocturne reappears, transposed, as the ending of the Eighth Nocturne. This indicates that Poulenc meant for them to be performed as a set, even though Poulenc himself admitted that he did not like every nocturne and preferred some over the others. Performing the entire set requires about 20 minutes. All eight nocturnes will be discussed here.

The First Nocturne, in C Major, is the longest of the set. It features the typical texture associated with the nocturne genre—lyrical melody over arpeggiated accompaniment (see Example 66). The form is ABA'C, with the A sections featuring a memorable, simple melody. The B section provides both dynamic and textural contrast. The C section is notated in three staves, which may be influenced by Debussy or Bartók's *Musiques Nocturnes*, with the right playing the music notated in the middle, and the left hand playing the bottom staff as well as crossing over the right hand to play the music notated in the top staff (see Example 67). This will require the student to lean more to the right, without moving over on the bench. The last six measures, which are twice as slow as the preceding material, provide the cyclic material that will return at the end of the set (see Example 68).



Ex. 66. Francis Poulenc, 1st Nocturne, mm. 1-3.



Ex. 67. Poulenc, 1st Nocturne, mm. 71-72.

Ex. 68. Poulenc, 1st Nocturne, mm. 87-92.

Poulenc's indication that this nocturne should be played "without dragging" means that the tempo should move forward. He also indicates that liberal pedal should be used for the accompaniment; he reportedly stated that "one can never use enough pedal."<sup>96</sup> He

<sup>96</sup> Daniel. 165.

also indicates that the accompaniment should be played regularly, or straight. Poulenc despised *rubato*, so fluctuations in tempo should not be allowed unless indicated.<sup>97</sup>

The Second Nocturne, as the subtitle "Bal de jeunes filles" suggests, is full of youthful zeal and sprite, bringing to mind Robert Schumann's character of Florestan. This nocturne is in A Major with an ABA' structure. The B section, measures 14-23, moves to the minor mode and modulates through several different keys. It is more passionate, as indicated in the score, and provides dynamic contrast to the A section. The texture is very consistent, changing only for the first two measures of the B section and the last three measures of the piece.

The Second Nocturne is appealing because of its lyrical melody and animated character. One of the challenges of the piece is projecting and phrasing the melody. Even locating the melody is a challenge; although it is usually in the top voice, in several sections (see measures 5-7 in Example 69) the melody moves to an inner voice. The other challenging aspect of projecting the melody is the texture. Because melodic note must compete with 3-5 harmonic notes (see Example 70), the chords that are inserted between melody notes must be played lightly, or *leger*. The student should use two different dynamics for the melodic and harmonic parts to help with the balance; for example, the melody could be thought of as *mezzo-forte* and the harmony *pianissimo*.

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<sup>97</sup> Daniel. 165.



Ex. 69. Poulenc, 2nd Nocturne, mm. 4-7.



Ex. 70. Poulenc, 2nd Nocturne, m. 1.

The Third Nocturne, in F Major, is subtitled "Les cloches de Malines." The piece is meant to depict the bells of Malines, the French name for the city Mechelen. During 1934 when he composed this nocturne, Poulenc was in Mechelen, a Dutch-speaking city in Antwerp, the Flanders province of Belgium.

Poulenc scholar Keith Daniel describes this nocturne as "Bartók-like night-music."<sup>98</sup> The Bartók-like sound is apparent in the B section of this ternary nocturne, which is mysterious and agitated, similar to the mood of Bartók's *Musique Nocturnes*.

<sup>98</sup> Daniel. 179.

Compared to the A sections, the B section is more technically and musically challenging. While the A sections consist mainly of an ostinato figure in the left hand with a simple melody in the right hand, the B section features more dissonance, larger chords, and a more active pedal. Even though tenth intervals are notated in the right hand chords, it is possible to redistribute the notes between the hands, as seen in measures 44 and 46 in Example 71.



Ex. 71. Poulenc, 3rd Nocturne, mm. 44-47.

The Fourth Nocturne, in C Minor, is subtitled "Bal fantôme." A line from Julien Green's *Le Visionnaire* (The Dreamer) precedes the notated music: "Not a note or Scottish waltz was lost in the house, so that the patient had his share of the feast and went to his bed dreaming about the good years of his youth."<sup>99</sup> The nocturne is indeed dance-like, an example of a waltz or mazurka. It also has an element of melancholy and nostalgia typical of an ill person, or "le malade."

This nocturne has the gracefulness of Chopin combined with the harmony and angular melody typical of Poulenc (see Example 72). The large quantity of accidentals makes it hard to read, but it is technically one of the easiest in the set. Like the Third Nocturne, the Fourth Nocturne is in ternary form, however the reprise is dramatically

<sup>99</sup> Julien Green's *Le Visionnaire*: Pas une note des valse ou des scottishes ne se perdait dans toute la maison, si bien que le malade eut sa part de la fête et put rêver sur son grabat aux bonnes années de sa jeunesse.

shortened. Overall, the piece is subdued, unassuming, and charming, and could be used in pedagogy for phrasing and balance.



Ex. 72. Poulenc, 4th Nocturne, mm. 1-3.

The Fifth Nocturne, in D minor, depicts a nocturnal insect—the moth, or "Phalènes"—as its subtitle suggests. Similarly, Ravel depicted moths in "Noctuelles" of *Miroirs*. Poulenc's depiction is less challenging than Ravel's, with some fluttering, see (Example 73), but not as much as Ravel's. Poulenc's Fifth Nocturne consists of three main ideas: fluttering biting dissonance, seen in Example 73; a lyrical melody with chordal accompaniment, seen in Example 74; and a march-like theme, seen in Example 75.



Ex. 73. Poulenc, 5th Nocturne, m. 1.



Ex..74. Poulenc, 5th Nocturne, m. 17.



Ex. 75. Poulenc, 5th Nocturne, m. 28.

The Sixth Nocturne is in G Major, structured in an arch form, ABCBA. It starts calmly, featuring arpeggiations in the low, rich bass notes of the piano (see Example 76). The B section is slightly faster, building towards the climactic, passionate C section. Technically, this nocturne is among the easiest of the set. Its challenges are musical in its more rhythmic freedom, indicated by the tempo changes, *fermati*, commas, and *tenuto* markings.



Ex. 76. Poulenc, 6th Nocturne, mm. 1-2.

The Seventh Nocturne, in E-flat Major, is in ternary form. It resembles a prelude in its quasi-improvisatory style, featuring scales as the primary melodic element of its flowing A sections (see Example 77). The B section is march-like and played without pedal, as indicated in the score. This is one of the more technically challenging of the set, partly because of its quicker tempo, but it is still appealing—concise, sweet, and lyrical.



Ex. 77. Poulenc, 7th Nocturne, mm. 1-2.

The Eighth Nocturne, marked "pour servir de Coda au Cycle," is in G Major, except for the coda which ends in C Major. This nocturne is the easiest of the set; it is only two pages long and has significantly fewer accidentals than most of the other nocturnes. It is chordally oriented, as shown in Example 78. The student must be careful to bring out the melody above the blocked chord accompaniment. As mentioned above, the coda (see Example 79) is in C Major, introduced by an A-flat Major chord. The material for the coda is taken from the end of the First Nocturne; compare Example 79 to Example 68.



Ex. 78. Poulenc, 8th Nocturne, mm. 1-2.

*pp*

*ppp*

*ten.*

Noisay,  
Décembre 1938.

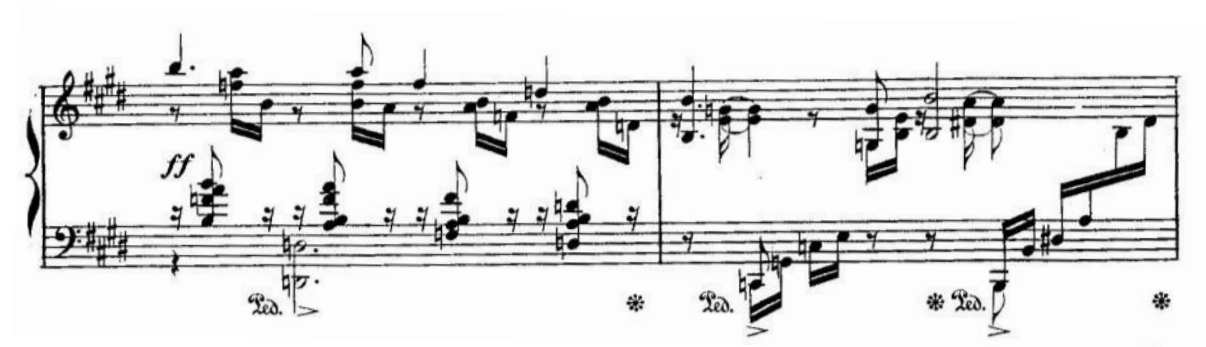
Ex. 79. Poulenc, 8th Nocturne, mm. 30-34.

### Gabriel Fauré: Nocturne No. 10 and Nocturne No. 11

Gabriel Fauré's tenth and eleventh Nocturnes are the easiest of his last nocturnes. Both nocturnes are intimate "mood" pieces, but neither of them consistently use the typical texture of lyrical melody over arpeggiated accompaniment. Furthermore, both of the nocturnes emphasize a progression in the music, rather than structuring the pieces in ternary form. As is typical of Fauré's later works in particular, the harmony is innovative

and chromatic without breaching the sense of tonality. Also typical to Fauré's music is the detail and avoidance of bravura.

Nocturne No. 10 in E Minor, Op. 99, is a lyrical, intimately passionate work. Instead of clear divisions between sections and ideas, this nocturne progresses seamlessly, building to the climax in measure 58 (see Example 80), which only lasts four measures. Measure 58 in Example 80 shows the texture used in the piece; the right hand is required to play both the melody and accompaniment. The example also shows Fauré's fondness for absent bass notes on the downbeat, which is apparent from the beginning (see Example 81).



Ex. 80. Gabriel Fauré, Nocturne No. 10 in E minor, mm. 58-59.



Ex. 81. Fauré, Nocturne No. 10, mm. 9-11.

Besides careful reading of accidentals, this piece requires the student to project a legato melody and play accompaniment in the same hand. To achieve this skill, the student can create exercises from the right hand part by dividing the voices between the

hands. The student practices projecting the legato melody in the right hand while playing the accompaniment softer and lighter in the left hand. Once the student has an aural image of the desired sound, both parts can be practiced with just the right hand before introducing the left hand part to the texture.

Since this piece is devoid of clear sections, pacing is important. The student will need to play with some *rubato*, pushing forward and holding back. As an example, the performer could move the music ahead slightly during the *crescendo* to the climax and linger in sections marked *espressivo* or *dolce*. Nevertheless, these tempo shifts should go unnoticed by the listener, since Fauré disliked exaggerated *rubato*.

Fauré composed Nocturne No. 11 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 104, No. 1, as an elegy for Noémi Lalo, the wife of music critic Pierre Lalo. This nocturne is restrained and haunting, with innovative but tonal harmony. Fauré uses extended tertian harmony, including ninth chords (see analysis in Example 82). Two motives provide the basis for the piece: a sigh motive, or falling third; and an ascending three-note pattern; see Example 83 for both motives.

$f\sharp^9$   $b^7$   $G^9$   $c\sharp^o7$   $d^7$   $A^{9+5}$   
 $f\sharp^9$   $D^7$   $e^9$   $C^7$   $d^9$   $C\sharp^7$   $C^7$   $d^9$   $C\sharp^7$

Ex. 82. Fauré, Nocturne No. 11 in F-sharp minor, mm. 64-68.

Ex. 83. Fauré, Nocturne No. 11, mm. 4-5.

Since this piece is slow and chordal and sound instantly begins to decay on the piano, phrasing is more difficult. To overcome the logistics of the way the piano action functions, the student must listen carefully, overlapping notes to create the illusion of a sustained line. Dynamic shaping and legato pedaling, in particular, a type of pedaling known as "half-pedaling," should also be used here. Half-pedaling involves sustaining bass notes and partially clearing the pedal for the upper register.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>100</sup> For further information on half-pedaling, refer to David Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 110-111.

# Samuel Barber: Nocturne

Samuel Barber's Nocturne, Homage to John Field, features the typical texture of the "nocturne style." The left hand provides the tonal framework of the piece, anchoring a melody comprised of a twelve-tone row. Barber actually uses four different tone rows, as well as transformations of the original rows; matrices for each of the four rows are shown in Examples 84, 85, 86, and 87. Barber uses only transpositions and retrogrades of the prime forms of the row, omitting any inversions or retrograde inversions. All four of the rows are remarkably lyrical, almost tonal in their inflections. Table 2 shows the location of each form of the four rows (see Table 2: Barber Tone Row Usage). The middle section of the nocturne uses motives from the first tone row in counterpoint, but the intervals are not exact and therefore will not be included in the table. Likewise, the middle section uses motives from the third tone row, but does not contain the exact intervals.

	I <sub>0</sub>	I <sub>5</sub>	I <sub>11</sub>	I <sub>10</sub>	I <sub>8</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>7</sub>	I <sub>6</sub>	I <sub>4</sub>	I <sub>9</sub>	I <sub>3</sub>	I <sub>2</sub>	
P <sub>0</sub>	C	F	B	B $\flat$	A $\flat$	D $\flat$	G	G $\flat$	E	A	E $\flat$	D	R <sub>0</sub>
P <sub>7</sub>	G	C	G $\flat$	F	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	B	E	B $\flat$	A	R <sub>7</sub>
P <sub>1</sub>	D $\flat$	G $\flat$	C	B	A	D	A $\flat$	G	F	B $\flat$	E	E $\flat$	R <sub>1</sub>
P <sub>2</sub>	D	G	D $\flat$	C	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	A	A $\flat$	G $\flat$	B	F	E	R <sub>2</sub>
P <sub>4</sub>	E	A	E $\flat$	D	C	F	B	B $\flat$	A $\flat$	D $\flat$	G	G $\flat$	R <sub>4</sub>
P <sub>11</sub>	B	E	B $\flat$	A	G	C	G $\flat$	F	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	R <sub>11</sub>
P <sub>5</sub>	F	B $\flat$	E	E $\flat$	D $\flat$	G $\flat$	C	B	A	D	A $\flat$	G	R <sub>5</sub>
P <sub>6</sub>	G $\flat$	B	F	E	D	G	D $\flat$	C	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	A	A $\flat$	R <sub>6</sub>
P <sub>8</sub>	A $\flat$	D $\flat$	G	G $\flat$	E	A	E $\flat$	D	C	F	B	B $\flat$	R <sub>8</sub>
P <sub>3</sub>	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	B	E	B $\flat$	A	G	C	G $\flat$	F	R <sub>3</sub>
P <sub>9</sub>	A	D	A $\flat$	G	F	B $\flat$	E	E $\flat$	D $\flat$	G $\flat$	C	B	R <sub>9</sub>
P <sub>10</sub>	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	A	A $\flat$	G $\flat$	B	F	E	D	G	D $\flat$	C	R <sub>10</sub>
	RI <sub>0</sub>	RI <sub>5</sub>	RI <sub>11</sub>	RI <sub>10</sub>	RI <sub>8</sub>	RI <sub>1</sub>	RI <sub>7</sub>	RI <sub>6</sub>	RI <sub>4</sub>	RI <sub>9</sub>	RI <sub>3</sub>	RI <sub>2</sub>	

Ex. 84. Barber, Nocturne, Tone Row 1.

	I <sub>0</sub>	I <sub>6</sub>	I <sub>9</sub>	I <sub>11</sub>	I <sub>8</sub>	I <sub>2</sub>	I <sub>5</sub>	I <sub>7</sub>	I <sub>4</sub>	I <sub>10</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>3</sub>	
P <sub>0</sub>	C	G $\flat$	A	B	A $\flat$	D	F	G	E	B $\flat$	D $\flat$	E $\flat$	R <sub>0</sub>
P <sub>6</sub>	G $\flat$	C	E $\flat$	F	D	A $\flat$	B	D $\flat$	B $\flat$	E	G	A	R <sub>6</sub>
P <sub>3</sub>	E $\flat$	A	C	D	B	F	A $\flat$	B $\flat$	G	D $\flat$	E	G $\flat$	R <sub>3</sub>
P <sub>1</sub>	D $\flat$	G	B $\flat$	C	A	E $\flat$	G $\flat$	A $\flat$	F	B	D	E	R <sub>1</sub>
P <sub>4</sub>	E	B $\flat$	D $\flat$	E $\flat$	C	G $\flat$	A	B	A $\flat$	D	F	G	R <sub>4</sub>
P <sub>10</sub>	B $\flat$	E	G	A	G	C	E	F	D	A $\flat$	B	D	R <sub>10</sub>
P <sub>7</sub>	G	D $\flat$	E	G $\flat$	E $\flat$	A	C	D	B	F	A $\flat$	B $\flat$	R <sub>7</sub>
P <sub>5</sub>	F	B	D	E	D $\flat$	G	B $\flat$	C	A	E $\flat$	G $\flat$	A $\flat$	R <sub>5</sub>
P <sub>8</sub>	A $\flat$	D	F	G	E	B $\flat$	D $\flat$	E $\flat$	C	G $\flat$	A	B	R <sub>8</sub>
P <sub>2</sub>	D	A $\flat$	B	D $\flat$	B $\flat$	E	G	A	G $\flat$	C	E $\flat$	F	R <sub>2</sub>
P <sub>11</sub>	B	F	A $\flat$	B $\flat$	G	D $\flat$	E	G $\flat$	E $\flat$	A	C	D	R <sub>11</sub>
P <sub>9</sub>	A	E $\flat$	G $\flat$	A $\flat$	F	B	D	E	D $\flat$	G	B $\flat$	C	R <sub>9</sub>
	R <sub>I0</sub>	R <sub>I6</sub>	R <sub>I9</sub>	R <sub>I11</sub>	R <sub>I8</sub>	R <sub>I2</sub>	R <sub>I5</sub>	R <sub>I7</sub>	R <sub>I4</sub>	R <sub>I10</sub>	R <sub>I1</sub>	R <sub>I3</sub>	

Ex. 85. Barber, Nocturne, Tone Row 2.

	I <sub>0</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>7</sub>	I <sub>2</sub>	I <sub>4</sub>	I <sub>5</sub>	I <sub>11</sub>	I <sub>6</sub>	I <sub>8</sub>	I <sub>9</sub>	I <sub>3</sub>	I <sub>10</sub>	
P <sub>0</sub>	F	G $\flat$	C	G	A	B $\flat$	E	B	D $\flat$	D	A $\flat$	E $\flat$	R <sub>0</sub>
P <sub>11</sub>	E	F	B	G $\flat$	A $\flat$	A	E $\flat$	B $\flat$	C	D $\flat$	G	D	R <sub>11</sub>
P <sub>5</sub>	B $\flat$	B	F	C	D	E $\flat$	A	E	G $\flat$	G	D $\flat$	A $\flat$	R <sub>5</sub>
P <sub>10</sub>	E $\flat$	E	B $\flat$	F	G	A $\flat$	D	A	B	C	G $\flat$	D $\flat$	R <sub>10</sub>
P <sub>8</sub>	D $\flat$	D	A $\flat$	E $\flat$	F	G $\flat$	C	G	A	B $\flat$	E	B	R <sub>8</sub>
P <sub>7</sub>	C	D $\flat$	G	D	E	F	B	G $\flat$	A $\flat$	A	E $\flat$	B $\flat$	R <sub>7</sub>
P <sub>1</sub>	G $\flat$	G	D $\flat$	A $\flat$	B $\flat$	B	F	C	D	E $\flat$	A	E	R <sub>1</sub>
P <sub>6</sub>	B	C	G $\flat$	D $\flat$	E $\flat$	E	B $\flat$	F	G	A $\flat$	D	A	R <sub>6</sub>
P <sub>4</sub>	A	B $\flat$	E	B	D $\flat$	D	A $\flat$	E $\flat$	F	G $\flat$	C	G	R <sub>4</sub>
P <sub>3</sub>	A $\flat$	A	E $\flat$	B $\flat$	C	D $\flat$	G	D	E	F	B	G $\flat$	R <sub>3</sub>
P <sub>9</sub>	D	E $\flat$	A	E	G $\flat$	G	D $\flat$	A $\flat$	B $\flat$	B	F	C	R <sub>9</sub>
P <sub>2</sub>	G	A $\flat$	D	A	B	C	G $\flat$	D $\flat$	E $\flat$	E	B $\flat$	F	R <sub>2</sub>
	R <sub>I0</sub>	R <sub>I1</sub>	R <sub>I7</sub>	R <sub>I2</sub>	R <sub>I4</sub>	R <sub>I5</sub>	R <sub>I11</sub>	R <sub>I6</sub>	R <sub>I8</sub>	R <sub>I9</sub>	R <sub>I3</sub>	R <sub>I10</sub>	

Ex. 86. Barber, Nocturne, Tone Row 3.

	I <sub>0</sub>	I <sub>3</sub>	I <sub>6</sub>	I <sub>9</sub>	I <sub>11</sub>	I <sub>8</sub>	I <sub>2</sub>	I <sub>5</sub>	I <sub>7</sub>	I <sub>4</sub>	I <sub>10</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	
P <sub>0</sub>	E <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup>	A	C	D	B	F	A <sup>b</sup>	B <sup>b</sup>	G	D <sup>b</sup>	E	R <sub>0</sub>
P <sub>9</sub>	C	E <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup>	A	B	A <sup>b</sup>	D	F	G	E	B <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>b</sup>	R <sub>9</sub>
P <sub>6</sub>	A	C	E <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>b</sup>	F	B	D	E	D <sup>b</sup>	G	B <sup>b</sup>	R <sub>6</sub>
P <sub>3</sub>	G <sup>b</sup>	A	C	E <sup>b</sup>	F	D	A <sup>b</sup>	B	D <sup>b</sup>	B <sup>b</sup>	E	G	R <sub>3</sub>
P <sub>1</sub>	E	G	B <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>b</sup>	E <sup>b</sup>	C	G <sup>b</sup>	A	B	A <sup>b</sup>	D	F	R <sub>1</sub>
P <sub>4</sub>	G	B <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>b</sup>	E	G <sup>b</sup>	E <sup>b</sup>	A	C	D	B	F	A <sup>b</sup>	R <sub>4</sub>
P <sub>10</sub>	D <sup>b</sup>	E	G	B <sup>b</sup>	C	A	E <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>b</sup>	F	B	D	R <sub>10</sub>
P <sub>7</sub>	B <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>b</sup>	E	G	A	G <sup>b</sup>	C	E <sup>b</sup>	F	D	A <sup>b</sup>	B	R <sub>7</sub>
P <sub>5</sub>	A <sup>b</sup>	B	D	F	G	E	B <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>b</sup>	E <sup>b</sup>	C	G <sup>b</sup>	A	R <sub>5</sub>
P <sub>8</sub>	B	D	F	A <sup>b</sup>	B <sup>b</sup>	G	D <sup>b</sup>	E	G <sup>b</sup>	E <sup>b</sup>	A	C	R <sub>8</sub>
P <sub>2</sub>	F	A <sup>b</sup>	B	D	E	D <sup>b</sup>	G	B <sup>b</sup>	C	A	E <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup>	R <sub>2</sub>
P <sub>11</sub>	D	F	A <sup>b</sup>	B	D <sup>b</sup>	B <sup>b</sup>	E	G	A	G <sup>b</sup>	C	E <sup>b</sup>	R <sub>11</sub>
	RI <sub>0</sub>	RI <sub>3</sub>	RI <sub>6</sub>	RI <sub>9</sub>	RI <sub>11</sub>	RI <sub>8</sub>	RI <sub>2</sub>	RI <sub>5</sub>	RI <sub>7</sub>	RI <sub>4</sub>	RI <sub>10</sub>	RI <sub>1</sub>	

Ex. 87. Barber, Nocturne, Tone Row 4.

Table 2: Barber Tone Row Usage

Measures	Tone Row (1, 2, 3, 4)	Prime or Transformation
1-3	1	P <sub>0</sub>
3-6	1	R <sub>0</sub>
6-10	2	P <sub>0</sub>
10-12	1	P <sub>7</sub>
14-15	3	P <sub>0</sub>
15-17	4	P <sub>0</sub>
17-19	2	P <sub>3</sub>
29-31	1	P <sub>0</sub>
31-34	1	R <sub>0</sub>
34-36	1	P <sub>0</sub>
38-40	3	P <sub>5</sub>
40-42	4	P <sub>5</sub>
42-44	2	P <sub>8</sub>

Although the employment of serial techniques creates a much different sound compared to the nocturnes of Field and Chopin, Barber's Nocturne still has many similarities to them. Barber, like Field and Chopin, highlights a lyrical melody, applies rhythmic freedom, employs a contrasting middle section, relies on fine use of the pedal, and creates an overall serene mood. While the nocturne is dedicated to Field, it is really

more comparable to Chopin in its wider use of the keyboard, embellishments, and bigger sound. The *rubato* style is also similar to that of Chopin; the performer should keep the left hand accompaniment steady while the right hand takes rhythmic liberties.

Several aspects of this nocturne qualify it as a challenging advanced-level work. The use of a tone row as the melody renders the piece more difficult to read, as well as musically harder to understand. Furthermore, the tone rows are often combined with ornamental writing, requiring rapid, sparkling execution. As practice exercises to gain velocity for these passages, the student should practice grouping the notes—reading them in groups instead of individual notes (see Examples 88-91). As the examples show, the number of notes grouped together increases during practice, from two to three. Although not shown, the student should increase the group sizes to four, five, etc. The individual groups should be executed rapidly, and should also change starting points and therefore accents (see Examples 89 and 90).



Ex. 88. Barber, Nocturne, m. 31. Original.



Ex. 89. Barber, Nocturne, m. 31. Grouping in twos.



Ex. 90. Barber, Nocturne, m. 31. Grouping in twos.



Ex. 91. Barber, Nocturne, m. 31. Grouping in threes.

Another difficult section appears at the end (see measures 44-45 in Example 92).

This passage requires agility, especially in fingering. While the descending parallel intervals may appear to have no pattern, it in fact has an underlying structure—octatonic scales generated by the top notes and bottom notes of each: F, E-flat, D, C, B, A, A-flat, G-flat.

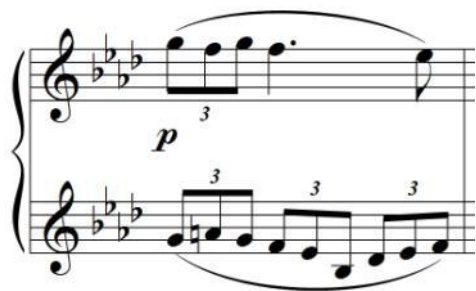


Ex. 92. Barber, Nocturne, mm. 43-45.

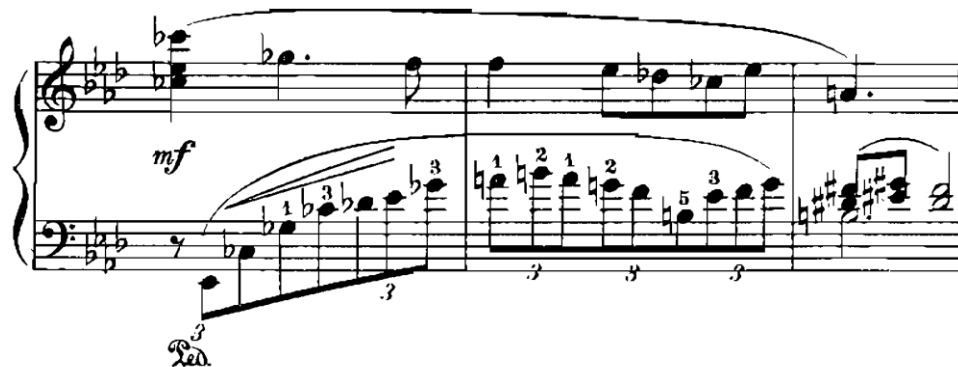
### Charles Griffes: *Notturmo*

*Notturmo*, by Charles Griffes, is the second piece of his *Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 6.

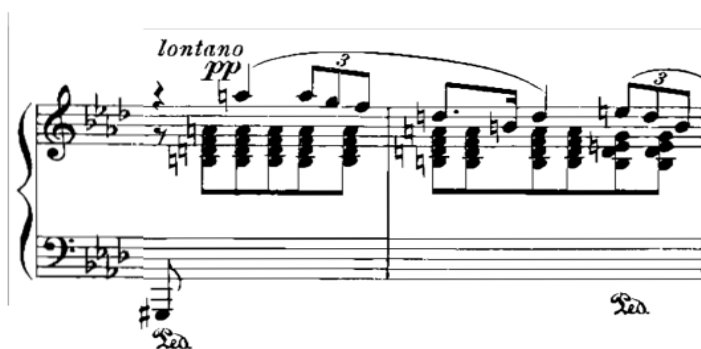
Griffes is often referred to as an American Impressionist, which is a fitting description of his style in *Notturmo*. This nocturne features hexatonic scales, nonfunctional harmony, extended tertian harmony, and planing—all elements of Impressionism (see Examples 93-96).



Ex. 93. Charles Griffes, *Notturmo*, Op. 6, No. 2, m. 100. Hexatonic scale.



Ex. 94. Griffes, *Notturmo*, mm. 112-114. Nonfunctional harmony. Note the change from E-flat Major to B Major in m. 114.



Ex. 95. Griffes, *Notturmo*, mm. 74-75. Extended tertian harmony.



Ex. 96. Griffes, *Notturmo*, m. 138. Planing.

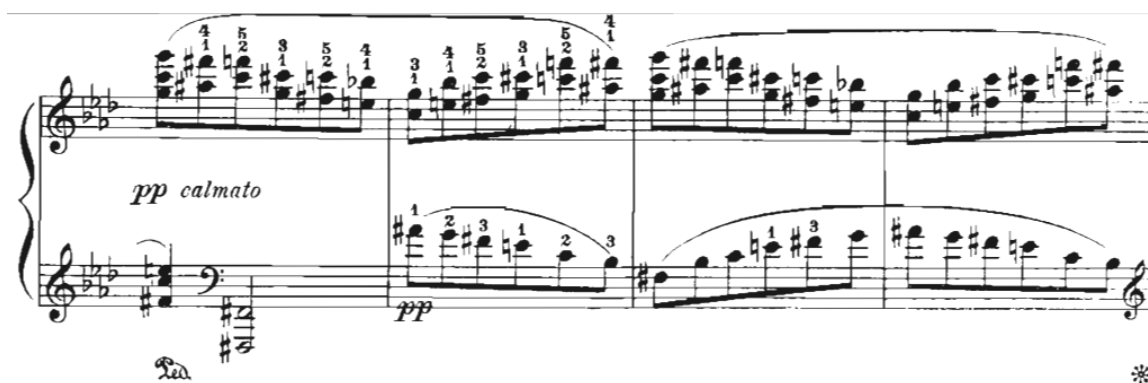
The texture of *Notturmo* is typical of a nocturne: a lyrical melody over arpeggiated accompaniment. The form is arch-shaped, with the reprise beginning in m. 98. The sections are delineated by texture changes, as well as key changes. The first section has a sparser texture—lyrical melody over harmonic thirds—leading into a wider keyboard range

and thicker texture of arpeggiated accompaniment and three-note chords in the right hand. The B section, beginning in m. 36, returns to a more confined range and a single melodic voice in the right hand. Measure 52 begins the C section, which features the melody first in the left hand within a thicker texture. The D section, beginning in measure 72, features a chordal texture. A' begins in measure 98 with a variation to its accompaniment style; instead of harmonic thirds, it uses a hexatonic scale figure. Measure 129 begins a new, but related, idea, also featuring a hexatonic scale. The nocturne closes with a glittering cadenza-like passage, shown in Example 97.

Ex. 97. Griffes, *Notturmo*, mm. 141-144.

As mentioned in Chapter II, the *Notturmo* is tonally ambiguous. Although the piece ends in A-flat Major, and its key signature indicates A-flat Major, the first A-flat in the piece does not occur until measure 9, and is preceded by A naturals in the accompaniment. Tonal shifts, planing, and exotic scales further obscure the tonality.

One of the challenging aspects of this piece is its harmonic language. For example, the scale figure in the left hand of measures 53-55 (see Example 98), is an arpeggiation of a ninth chord on F-sharp with a lowered fifth. Added to this are fourths, tritones, fifths, and sixths in the right hand, generating a fairly complex harmonic language. This section requires careful, efficient fingering as well as fluid hand and arm motion.



Ex. 98. Griffes, *Notturmo*, mm. 52-55.

Another difficulty faced in this nocturne is the rhythmic freedom in its combination and alternation of duple and triple rhythms. The challenge for the performer is to make the switches between rhythms imperceptible, so as to not disturb the fluidity of the piece. This requires a fine sense of timing and judicious use of *rubato*. In short, the nocturne requires a musically intuitive student.

#### Lowell Liebermann: Nocturnes Nos. 1, 2, and 5

Lowell Liebermann's nocturnes are advanced pieces requiring fine technique and musicianship. Only a select few of the nocturnes will be discussed here: Nocturnes 1, 2, and 5. These nocturnes were chosen for their appealing melodic material and technical level, and because they are among the easiest of Liebermann's Nocturnes.

Nocturne No. 1, Op. 20, is lyrical and subdued, but also dissonant and ambiguous. Although Liebermann's harmonic writing is chromatic and dissonant, it still seems to have a tonal center and goals. Despite an overarching tonal center of G, there are many passages with other tonal centers, established through pedal tones and repetition, as well as through the direction of phrases.

The formal structure of the piece is ABCDAC'B', with each of the sections delineated by changes in texture, thematic material, rhythmic material, and dynamic. The A sections feature the typical nocturne texture of a *cantando* melody over arpeggiated accompaniment (see Example 99). The louder and lower B sections are more strident and heavy (see Example 100). The C section features a more subdued melody with an accompaniment of open intervals on the off beats (see Example 101). The D section is a transition back to A, marked by *leggero* ornamental figures in the right hand accompanied by an A drone (see Example 102), which gradually develops into the arpeggiations of the A section.



Ex. 99. Lowell Liebermann, Nocturne No. 1, Op. 20, mm. 2-4.  
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Ex. 100. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 1, mm. 23-24.  
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Ex. 101. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 1, m. 32.  
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Ex. 102. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 1, m. 50.  
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Liebermann's Nocturne No. 1 is more difficult musically than technically.

Because the sections are all quite different from each other, the challenge for the student is to knit the pieces together into a performance, which is done through a very detailed aural image. The student should spend time studying the score, analyzing its every indication, in particular the wide dynamic range—*pppp* to *ff*. Achieving this range requires

careful planning on the student's part. For example, even though the beginning of the piece is marked *pp*, there is a *diminuendo* in measure 4 (refer back to Example 99).

Therefore, the student should start very softly, but increase the dynamic slightly at the top of the phrase, measure 3, so there is room to gradually become softer in the last part of measure 4. To compound the issue, the student must be aware of dynamics on the larger scale; the A section ends with a *pppp* marking. The loudest dynamic required, *ff*, is preceded by a *pp* and *diminuendo*; thus the softer the student can get in measure 94, the louder the *subito ff* will seem in measure 95. Achieving these subtle changes in dynamic will also be aided by careful pedaling and articulation. A deeper pedal will result in a louder, more resonant sound. Similarly, a passage will seem louder if the student plays deeper into the keys with an exaggerated tenuto touch.

Nocturne No. 2, Op. 31, begins slowly and freely with a single line of music that gradually morphs into the arpeggiated accompaniment of the first thematic idea, which features an expressive, lyrical melody (see Example 103). The second thematic idea, dotted chords, begins in measure 10.



Ex. 103. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 2, Op. 31, m. 6.  
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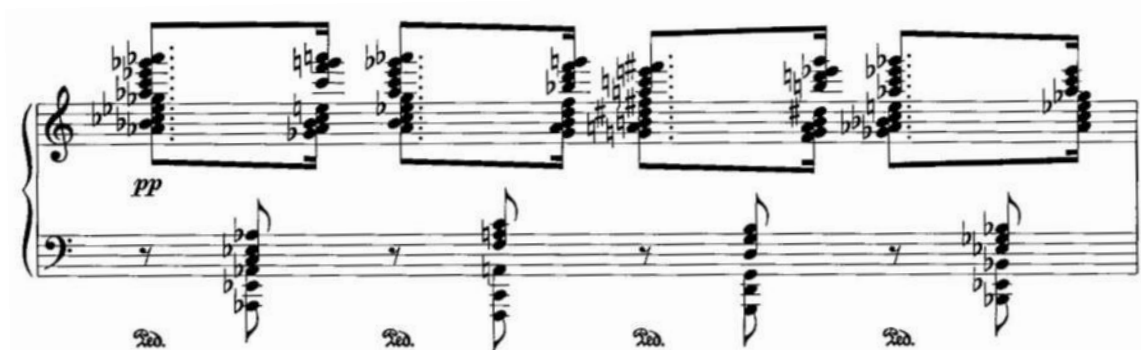
The contrasting section begins in measure 22 with a sudden increase in dynamic (see Example 104). This middle section contrasts more in mood than in thematic

material, since it uses variations of the beginning thematic material. The section highlights the dotted chord motive, but with thicker chords and clusters (see Example 105). The arpeggiated accompaniment of the first theme is also present in the middle section, but this time with octave flurries in the right hand. The nocturne reaches its climax in measure 30 before returning to the previous, more subdued mood in measure 33. The return features a combination of the original theme plus the octave decorations from the middle section (see Example 106). The nocturne ends with a brief recollection of the opening material.



Ex. 104. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 2, m. 22.

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Ex. 105. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 2, m. 24.

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Ex. 106. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 2, m. 33.

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This nocturne is more technically difficult than the first. It requires fluid, quick movement over two to three octaves. Agile movement is essential in the left hand arpeggio figures in the first thematic idea (see Example 107). Students must practice making the jump from the C-sharp to the low F-sharp with small, efficient, arc-shaped motions; using finger 3, instead of 5, for the lowest note will result in a more secure sound.

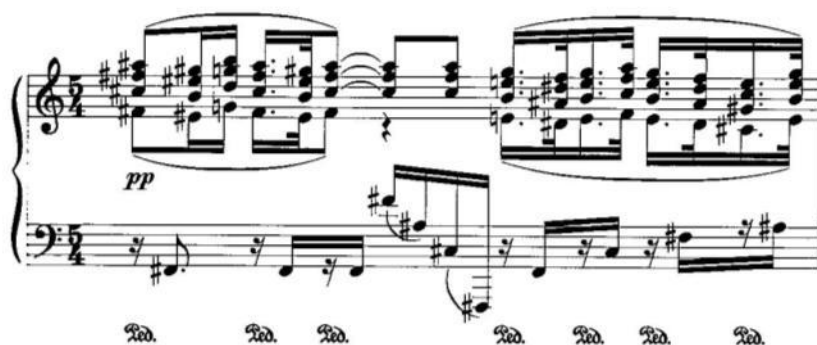


Ex. 107. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 2, m. 9.

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In the next measure (see Example 108) the notes with downward stems in the upper part should be played by the left hand, requiring the left hand to make two octave jumps quickly and without hesitation. This same technique is also required in measure 24

(refer to Example 105). This section is even more challenging, since the chords are thicker and yet are supposed to be played very quietly. Further compounding the challenge, the chords are littered with accidentals, making it even more difficult to read. Students will most likely need to memorize this section in order to play it convincingly.



Ex. 108. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 2, m. 10.

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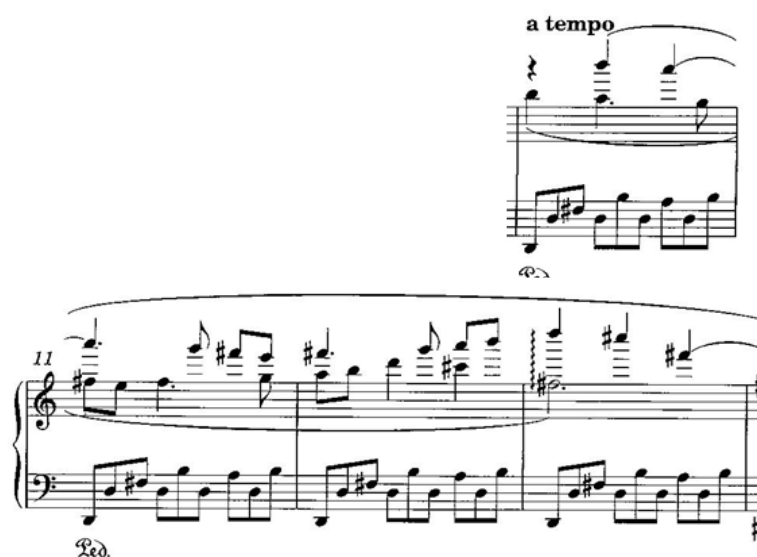
The climax of the piece also requires agile movement, but it is less challenging than the previously mentioned passage. The triadic chords are easier to find, and the low arpeggio figure does not change within the measure. Hand crossing is also required in this section (see Example 109).



Ex. 109. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 2, m. 30.

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Nocturne No. 5, Op. 55, is the most difficult of the three Liebermann nocturnes included in this discussion. Its foremost challenges are its contrapuntal passages with rapid filigree passages and parallel thirds. Rather than the common ternary form, this nocturne is in a variation form. Like the other two nocturnes, the piece starts with a triplet arpeggiated figure in the left hand before introducing the lyrical, duple melody in the right hand, which will be referred to as the "A" theme. The first variation of the theme features a canon starting in measure 10 (see Example 110); the melody is repeated an octave higher, at first one beat behind the main melody. Keeping the two lines balanced while still shaping each line is the challenge here.



Ex. 110. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 5, Op. 55, mm. 10-13.  
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After changing from 3/4 to 2/4 meter, Liebermann introduces a second, related, theme in octaves, which will be referred to as the "B" theme. The left hand accompaniment is still in triplets, but now uses only intervals of a third. This comparatively simple section is followed by a more complex passage: the second

variation of the A theme combined with the theme with rapid filigree featuring fourth intervals. Example 111 shows suggested fingering for an excerpt of this passage.

531531 53532 1 521 2 1 2 5 3 1 5315353 1 1 531

Ex. 111. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 5, mm. 35-36.

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The third variation of the A theme features parallel thirds in the right hand with the theme now in octaves in the bass; fingering suggestions are given in Example 112. The fourth variation is similar to the second in its use of filigree, however this filigree is continuous and uses seconds instead of fourths; fingering suggestions for this passage are given in Example 113.

4 5 4 5 4 5 4 3 4 5 4 5 4 5 4 5  
2 3 2 3 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3  
1 1 1 1 1

Ex. 112. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 5, m. 49.

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2 3 2 5 5 4 3 2 2 3 2 5 5 4 3 1 2 3 2 5 5 4 3  
 1 1 1

Ex. 113. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 5, m. 57.

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In measure 69, Liebermann combines the B theme with the A theme. The original A theme returns in measure 84, followed by a canon in three voices in measure 93 (see Example 114). The canon is similar to the first variation with the addition of another voice an octave below the original melody. As with the first variation, balance and phrasing should be the main concern.

Ex. 114. Liebermann, Nocturne No. 5, mm. 93-98.

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## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

#### **Trends in the Twentieth Century Nocturne**

Not all twentieth century nocturnes, or night pieces, follow the generic "nocturne style" connected to Field and Chopin. As previously discussed, even nocturnes by Field and Chopin do not always adhere to the lyrical melody over arpeggiated accompaniment typically associated with the genre. Hence, the texture and form are not consistent throughout either the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, some similarities exist in the nineteenth century genre; as stated in Chapter I, the common threads in nineteenth century nocturnes were lyricism and subdued/melancholy moods, with an aversion to the harsh or strange. Providing contrast was Schumann's *Vier Nachtstücke*, Op. 23, which embraced the fantastic and strange. Both lyricism and the evocation of the fantastic or strange are prominent in contemporary night pieces. Four commonalities can be extracted from the twentieth century nocturnes discussed in Chapter IV: lyricism combined with distinct dissonance; subdued openings and endings; contrasting central section(s); and rhythmic freedom.

All of the nocturnes discussed in Chapter IV included elements of lyricism. Recall Czerny's description of the nocturne from Chapter I, which characterized it as soft, graceful, and song-like, but never harsh or strange. Although many of the twentieth century nocturnes discussed would likely sound harsh and strange to nineteenth century

ears, their combination of lyricism and distinct dissonance make them among the most accessible twentieth century works. Examples of this combination are found in Brubeck's pieces *I See, Satie* and *Strange Meadowlark*. The marked dissonance in *I See, Satie* is manifest through the use of twelve-tone rows, while *Strange Meadowlark* features "strange" harmonies. Bartók's *Notturmo* and Dello Joio's *Night Song* are also intermediate level works that demonstrate lyricism in combination with harsher dissonances.

At the early advanced level, Sculthorpe's *Night Pieces* and Tansman's *Quatre Nocturne* both adhere to this same idea. Sculthorpe's intended lyricism is demonstrated by his directions such as *dolce* and *espressivo*. Dissonance is a product of his compositional and harmonic language, which includes octave displacement and prevailing dissonant intervals. Tansman indicates lyricism similarly, using *dolce* often as well as long phrase markings; this lyricism is combined with non-triadic harmonic language.

Many of the advanced nocturnes discussed also share this combination of seeming opposites—lyricism with marked dissonance: several of Poulenc's nocturnes; as well as the nocturnes by Fauré, Barber, Griffes, and Liebermann. Among Poulenc's nocturnes, the third is perhaps the most obvious example of this combination. However, in this instance, lyricism in the A sections is juxtaposed against the strikingly dissonant B section. In contrast, the fourth nocturne combines lyricism simultaneously with dissonance. The lyrical melody is angular and is accompanied by non-functional harmony that obscures the tonal center. This ambiguity due to non-functional harmony is also an aspect of the nocturnes by Fauré and Griffes, both of which also both emphasize lyricism. Fauré indicates lyricism through *dolce*, *espressivo* and *cantando* markings. Likewise, Griffes

also uses indications of *dolce* and *espressivo*, as well as *cantabile*. Barber's nocturne is the epitome of the merging of lyricism with distinct dissonance. The use of a twelve-tone row qualifies it as dissonant, yet Barber's writing style for the row is remarkably lyrical. Even though Liebermann's nocturnes are all primarily lyrical, dissonance is also prominent. For example, the latter aspect is manifest through the use of clusters in Nocturne No. 2 and the piercing filigree in Nocturne No. 5.

The second commonality among the twentieth century nocturnes is their similarities in dynamic markings. Almost all of the nocturnes feature subdued openings and endings, while most also included at least one section with a contrasting, louder dynamic. The table below (Table 3: Dynamics) shows the starting and ending dynamics for each nocturne discussed in Ch. IV, as well as the peak dynamic of the piece. Dynamics notated in parentheses indicate approximate dynamics in cases where *crescendi* or *diminuendos* changed the dynamic level.

Table 3: Dynamics

Title	Composer	Start	Loudest	End
INTERMEDIATE				
Nocturne for the Left Hand	Catherine Rollin	<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>	( <i>p</i> )
<i>Moonlight Nocturne</i>		<i>p</i>	<i>mf</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Polynesian Nocturne</i>	William Gillock	( <i>p</i> )	<i>mf</i>	<i>ppp</i>
<i>Summer Nocturne</i>	Robert Vandall	<i>mp</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Nocturnes: Lost Waltz (Edited Version)</i>	Dave Brubeck	<i>mp</i>	<i>mp</i>	<i>mp</i>
<i>Nocturnes: I See, Satie</i>		<i>p</i>	<i>mf</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Nocturnes: Blue Lake Tahoe</i>		<i>mf</i>	( <i>f</i> )	( <i>p</i> )
<i>Nocturnes: Looking at a Rainbow</i>		<i>p</i>	<i>mf</i>	<i>ppp</i>
<i>Nocturnes: Strange Meadowlark</i>		<i>mp</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ppp</i>
Nocturne	Gian-Carlo Menotti	<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>pp</i>
<i>Notturmo (from Mikrokosmos)</i>	Béla Bartók	<i>p</i>		<i>p</i>
Nocturne	Ralph Vaughan Williams	<i>p</i>		<i>ppp</i>
Nocturne (from <i>Sonatina Romantica</i> )	Benjamin Britten	<i>pp</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ppp</i>
<i>Night Song</i>	Norman Dello Joio	<i>pp</i>	<i>mf</i>	<i>pp</i>
<i>Midsummer Nocturne</i>	Aaron Copland	<i>mp</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>p</i>
Nocturnes No. 5	Michael Valenti	<i>mp</i>	<i>mp</i>	<i>p</i>
Nocturne No. 10		<i>p</i>	( <i>mf</i> )	<i>ppp</i>
EARLY ADVANCED				
<i>Night Pieces: Snow</i>	Peter Sculthorpe	<i>pp</i>	<i>mf</i>	<i>pp</i>
<i>Night Pieces: Moon</i>		<i>p</i>	<i>mf</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Night Pieces: Flowers</i>		<i>mp</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>mp</i>
<i>Night Pieces: Night</i>		<i>p</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>mp</i>
<i>Night Pieces: Stars</i>		<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ppp</i>
Nocturne	William Gillock	<i>pp</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>pp</i>
<i>Quatre Nocturnes: No. 1</i>	Alexandre Tansman	<i>p</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>pp</i>
<i>Quatre Nocturnes: No. 2</i>		<i>p</i>	<i>p</i>	( <i>pp</i> )
<i>Quatre Nocturnes: No. 3</i>		<i>p</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>ppp</i>
<i>Quatre Nocturnes: No. 4</i>		<i>pp</i>	<i>pp</i>	<i>ppp</i>
Nocturne No. 1	Erik Satie	<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>pp</i>
Nocturne No. 2		<i>p</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>pp</i>
Nocturne No. 3		<i>p</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>ff</i>
Nocturne No. 4		<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>	( <i>p</i> )
Nocturne No. 5		<i>p</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>pp</i>
Nocturne	Gustav Holst	<i>p</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>p</i>
ADVANCED				
Nocturne	George Rochberg	<i>pp</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>pp</i>
Nocturne No. 1	Francis Poulenc	<i>mf</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>mp</i>

Table 3: Dynamics

Title	Composer	Start	Loudest	End
Nocturne No. 2	Gabriel Fauré	<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>p</i>
Nocturne No. 3		<i>p</i>	<i>fff</i>	<i>pp</i>
Nocturne No. 4		<i>pp</i>	<i>mp</i>	<i>ppp</i>
Nocturne No. 5		<i>p</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>p</i>
Nocturne No. 6		<i>p</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>p</i>
Nocturne No. 7		<i>mp</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>pp</i>
Nocturne No. 8		<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>pp</i>
Nocturne No. 10		<i>p</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>pp</i>
Nocturne No. 11		( <i>p</i> )	<i>ff</i>	<i>p</i>
Nocturne		<i>p</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>pp</i>
<i>Notturmo</i>		<i>pp</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>ppp</i>
Nocturne No. 1	Samuel Barber	<i>pp</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>pp</i>
Nocturne No. 2	Charles Griffes	<i>pp</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>pp</i>
Nocturne No. 5	Lowell Liebermann	<i>pp</i>	<i>fff</i>	<i>pp</i>
Nocturne No. 5		<i>pp</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>pp</i>

The presence of a contrasting central section is the third characteristic of many twentieth century nocturnes. These central episodes sometimes coincided with peak dynamic levels, as shown in Table 3: Dynamics. In these instances, the contrasting section is easily identified by its louder dynamic. The central sections are also identified by changes to texture, tempo and/or key, which may or may not be identified in the music score. In some nocturnes, all four factors are present. The table below (Table 4: Form Delineation) shows which factors are used to create contrasting central sections. Not all nocturnes feature a central episode; these nocturnes will have blank columns. The parentheses around the "X's" in Liebermann's nocturnes indicate that a faster rhythmic value is used rather than a different tempo marking.

Table 4: Form Delineation

Title	Composer	Dynamic	Texture	Tempo	Key
INTERMEDIATE					
Nocturne for the Left Hand	Catherine Rollin				
<i>Moonlight Nocturne</i>			X		X
<i>Polynesian Nocturne</i>	William Gillock		X	X	X
<i>Summer Nocturne</i>	Robert Vandall	X	X		
<i>Nocturnes: Lost Waltz (edited version)</i>	Dave Brubeck				
<i>Nocturnes: I See, Satie</i>					
<i>Nocturnes: Blue Lake Tahoe</i>					
<i>Nocturnes: Looking at a Rainbow</i>		X	X		
<i>Nocturnes: Strange Meadowlark</i>		X	X		
Nocturne	Gian-Carlo Menotti	X			X
<i>Notturmo (from Mikrokosmos)</i>	Béla Bartók				
Nocturne	Ralph Vaughan Williams				X
Nocturne (from <i>Sonatina Romantica</i> )	Benjamin Britten		X		X
<i>Night Song</i>	Norman Dello Joio				
<i>Midsummer Nocturne</i>	Aaron Copland	X		X	
Nocturnes No. 5	Michael Valenti				
Nocturne No. 10			X		
EARLY ADVANCED					
<i>Night Pieces: Snow</i>	Peter Sculthorpe	X	X	X	
<i>Night Pieces: Moon</i>		X	X	X	
<i>Night Pieces: Flowers</i>		X	X	X	
<i>Night Pieces: Night</i>					
<i>Night Pieces: Stars</i>					
Nocturne	William Gillock				
<i>Quatre Nocturnes: No. 1</i>	Alexandre Tansman				
<i>Quatre Nocturnes: No. 2</i>			X		
<i>Quatre Nocturnes: No. 3</i>					
<i>Quatre Nocturnes: No. 4</i>					
Nocturne No. 1	Erik Satie	X	X	X	X
Nocturne No. 2		X	X	X	X
Nocturne No. 3			X	X	X
Nocturne No. 4			X	X	X
Nocturne No. 5			X	X	X
Nocturne	Gustav Holst	X	X	X	X

Table 4: Form Delineation

Title	Composer	Dynamic	Texture	Tempo	Key
ADVANCED					
Nocturne	George Rochberg	X	X	X	X
Nocturne No. 1	Francis Poulenc				
Nocturne No. 2		X	X		X
Nocturne No. 3		X	X	X	X
Nocturne No. 4					
Nocturne No. 5		X	X		X
Nocturne No. 6		X	X	X	X
Nocturne No. 7		X	X		X
Nocturne No. 8					
Nocturne No. 10	Gabriel Fauré				
Nocturne No. 11					
Nocturne	Samuel Barber	X	X	X	X
<i>Notturmo</i>	Charles Griffes	X	X	X	X
Nocturne No. 1	Lowell Liebermann	X	X		X
Nocturne No. 2		X	X	(X)	X
Nocturne No. 5		X	X	(X)	

Rhythmic freedom is the fourth, and final, shared characteristic in twentieth century nocturnes. This rhythmic freedom is most often expressed by the performer through use of *rubato*. However, in some of the nocturnes, *rubato* playing should be avoided. In these nocturnes, the composer has written either complex rhythms that obscure the pulse or a rhythm that sounds "free" due to the use of metric displacement.

Most of the nocturnes align with the first category, in which the performer must apply *rubato* playing. Sometimes the composer specifically indicates the use of *rubato*, which is the case in Rollin's Nocturne for the Left Hand, Vandall's *Summer Nocturne*, Brubeck's *Looking at a Rainbow*, Rochberg's Nocturne, and Liebermann's Nocturnes Nos. 1, 2, and 5. In other cases, tempo changes are written in the score, providing the performer with a more specific direction of how and when to play *rubato*. This is especially the case in the nocturnes by French composers Satie, Poulenc and Fauré; Satie

indicates rhythmic freedom by using directions such as *retenir*, *ralentir* and *attendre*, while Poulenc uses *pressez* and *cédez*, and Fauré uses *ritardando*. Although these composers are more specific about changes in the tempo, they did not indicate every minute detail, since it is simply not practical. The performer must be intuitive enough to know where the music needs to hold back or push forward slightly, as well as where there needs to be space between ideas or phrases.

In a few of the nocturnes, rhythmic freedom is a product of the actual writing, not the performer. This is the case in Sculthorpe's *Night Pieces*, which feature intricate, sometimes complex rhythms. Written-out rhythmic freedom is most obvious in the second movement, *Night*; ties over bar lines and mixtures of duple and triple rhythms create an impression of rhythmic freedom. Another example of creating the illusion of rhythmic freedom is found in the ornamental writing of Barber's Nocturne, which includes a passage of 14 against 6. Furthermore, the absence of bar lines in the middle section of Barber's Nocturne creates a visual impression of rhythmic freedom.

### **Recommendations for Piano Teachers**

Nocturnes and related night pieces are among the most accessible, student-friendly contemporary works. Their emphasis on lyricism renders this genre more immediately appealing to students. As pedagogical tools, these nocturnes can be used to teach or reinforce concepts such as phrasing, voicing, *rubato*, and legato pedaling. Because of their nature as mood pieces, many of these nocturnes could also be used for teaching expressive playing. The technique of expanding or stretching the left hand in particular, required by the "nocturne style" of many of these pieces, could also be taught using these nocturnes.

The nocturnes discussed in Ch. IV are some of the most appealing contemporary nocturnes accessible in the United States. However, there are stand-out pieces even among this smaller group. Furthermore, some nocturnes are more budget friendly than others. With quality and practicality in mind, only a few select nocturnes are highly recommended for use in the piano studio.

In the Intermediate level, Rollin's Nocturne for Left Hand is recommended for its practicality; most piano teachers will eventually need to work around an injured arm or wrist. Gillock's *Polynesian Nocturne* is recommended for its appealing Hawaiian atmosphere and low cost. Brubeck's book of Nocturnes includes a large quantity of quality music at a low price. Britten's Nocturne is higher priced, but if a student can afford it, it is well worth the cost for its beautiful melody and lush harmonies. Copland's *Midsummer Nocturne* is available in a collection of his piano music, which is quite reasonably priced for the amount of music it contains.

Among the Early Advanced nocturnes, Sculthorpe's *Night Pieces* is a highly recommended buy because of its contemporary sound and high-quality composition. However, teachers should be aware that the availability of this work is more limited. Satie's Nocturnes are available as free downloads online as part of the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP).

The Advanced nocturnes discussed are all of high quality. Rochberg's Nocturne is part of a work that contains a variety of styles and techniques, and it can be purchased at a low cost. Poulenc's Eight Nocturnes are higher priced and cost even more if bought as individual nocturnes; they may not be as practical for the average piano teacher. Highly recommended, Fauré's Nocturnes and Barcarolles are available at a low price through

Dover Publications. Barber's Nocturne, like Copland's, is available in a collection of Barber's piano music, which should be in the library of every serious piano teacher and student. Griffes's *Notturmo* is available online as part of IMSLP. Although Liebermann's works are fairly inexpensive, it is probably not practical to buy all eleven Nocturnes. Of those discussed in Ch. IV, Nos. 2 and 5 stand out above No. 1.

As the twenty-first century progresses, the nocturne still appeals to composers and audiences alike. Its charm stems from the four common threads discussed: lyricism combined with distinct dissonance, subdued openings and endings, contrasting central sections, and rhythmic freedom. Nocturnes and night pieces for solo piano continue to be written world-wide, as demonstrated in Appendix A. Likewise, the piano still maintains its international appeal, especially in music education. Even though the sheer amount of contemporary music for piano can be overwhelming, nocturnes and night pieces stand out as some of the most accessible, appealing contemporary music for the piano student.

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## APPENDIX A

### LIST OF ADDITIONAL TWENTIETH TO TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SOLO PIANO NOCTURNES

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