

PIANO PROJECT 2014:
REPORT AND ANALYSIS OF PIECES SUBMITTED AND PERFORMED
AND THE PRESENTATIONAL FACTORS AFFECTING THEIR
ACCESSIBILITY FOR ASPIRANT PERFORMERS

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In collaboration with
COLCHESTER NEW MUSIC

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The subject matter in this report may have been revisited or may have been wholly or partially superseded in subsequent work by the author, featured composers and *Colchester New Music*.

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Dylan Christopher

Colchester, April 2015

Abstract

This report presents an analysis of the pieces written for submission to the call for scores by *Colchester New Music* titled *Piano Project 2014*. All of the music submitted was written for aspirant musicians for use in performance and teaching. The pieces featured were performed in a concert in October 2014.

A total of four weeks preparation time was given to all performers to prepare for the concert. During this time, minimal input was given to the students to prepare their performances. This was to achieve the unbiased conditions under which aspirant musicians would come into contact with the source material.

The paper draws upon primary research in the field via preparation and performance of the submitted material. Through analysis of the musical scores, and testimony from elected student-performers, a better understanding can be gained into what elements of the presented pieces are accessible to aspirant musicians.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

A call for piano scores was issued by Colchester New Music in July 2014 inviting composers working or living in the United Kingdom to write a series of piano pieces. The aim of the project was to create a collection of accessible contemporary pieces for use in piano performance and education. A total of 37 individual scores were submitted to the project by the closing date for submissions on 29 August 2014 with keen interest from both professional and amateur composers. 18 pieces were selected from the submitted material and, after four weeks preparation time, were successfully performed in a concert on 23 October 2014 by student-performers and the author of this document.

Four students were elected for performance whose ability ranged from ABRSM *Grade 1* to *Grade 5*, respectively. Music submitted ranged in content including single movement programme-music, abstract art music and multiple movement concert-pieces, some of which written as duets to be used as teaching pieces between a student and their mentor. Allowances were made for music not specifically written for the project if the content met all other criteria stated in the call for score composition-brief.

There was a variety of pieces submitted and range of styles covered, which allowed for an in-depth analysis of the various elements that make music accessible for aspirant musicians. This document features an overview and report on each piece selected for performance based on: the submitted score, elements of engraving and orchestration, and the effects which they had on the final performance. The reporting does not critique the composition or musical ideas contained within and is limited to the presentation of scored material and its affects upon preparation and execution of the final performance.

For this report accessibility will be determined synonymous with the spectrum that makes up difficulty. The Oxford English Dictionary defines difficulty as: “A thing that is hard to accomplish, deal with, or understand” (Oxford University Press, 2015, Online), resulting in the bilateral relationship: less difficult, easy to accomplish; more difficult, harder to accomplish. In music, these concepts can be attributed to: less difficult, fewer actions to perform; more difficult, more actions to perform.

These actions can include but are not limited to: the number of notes required to be performed, distance between tessitura, rapidity of tempi, dynamic variant, articulation requirements, rhythmic qualities and many more elements that require thought to bring a musical score to performance. An attribute that is important, but often not considered is the presentation and formatting of the scored material; the effects of which are drastic and far-reaching.

All of the music submitted to the project is taken as complete, in its final-iteration, and ready for performance. The musical content within each score is received as having sufficient thought given to the construction and craft. Owing to this, the intentions are pursued without question to the best of each respective performer’s ability.

Chapter 2 – ‘Rains’

An effective minimalistic piece, *Rains* conveys a clear concept via use of the piano’s lyrical and plaintive tonal-qualities. It was chosen to open the concert due to its meditative and relaxed atmosphere. A number of students have since commented on the music, stating that the similarity in style and notation to pieces already in their repertory makes it approachable on counts of familiarity in shapes and sounds.

The music was purposefully written for the project with an original concept. The descriptive title ‘*Rains*’ gives the performer an immediate sense of what atmosphere to convey in the music. The use of a metronome mark is not necessary as the piece implies a favour of atmosphere over precision; illustrated by the tempo marking *andante rubato*. The score was neatly presented with clear thought given to the engraving process. A minor criticism would be to include the final line of music in the two bar format that is visible throughout the piece; moving the position of a bar from the first or second lines would achieve this.

From the perspective of an aspirant musician, potential difficulties could arise due to the D-flat major key-signature. However, knowledge of the scale pattern and explanation from a mentor or tutor would quickly address this issue. *Rains* is an exemplary, accessible, and well-constructed piece of music that opens many paths for exploration as a teaching resource or concert piece, including: *cantabile* voicing, pattern and shape recognition, and tonal control. There are no revisions needed before this piece is given to aspirant musicians or publicized.

Chapter 3 – ‘Chant: The Pillar of Angels’

With carefully structured compositional elements and an intellectual theme, *Chant: Pillar of Angels* delivers a highly chromatic and discordant journey into conflict and resolution. This item was featured second in the concert after *Rains* to illustrate the extreme variety in the music submitted to the project. The piece was well received at the showcase concert, but not well received by the focus group of aspirant musicians for further solo study. The general consensus towards the music was that the extreme dissonance made listening difficult and resulted in a diminished motivation to pursue further study. When presented with the score, students responded with confusion due to unfamiliar shapes, awkward hand-positioning and a lack of consistency with scoring.

Given the subject-matter and challenging nature of the piece, it is difficult to determine whether or not this piece was written *specifically* for the project. If a repeat performance was to be given, some minor scoring details would need to be addressed, including: page-format converted from landscape to portrait; consistency in musical shapes (specifically: bar 33); more use of *al ottava* and *ottava basso*. It might be pertinent to illustrate on the score each section (pillar block); the current pedalling-marks suggest this but something definitive and easily recognisable would be more effective.

From the perspective of an aspirant musician, this piece is not accessible. At a glance it looks deceptively simple due to the use of *crotchets* throughout, but, upon closer inspection the simplicity soon diminishes. The music requires decoding due to every note having an accidental and almost unique shape (in some cases identical note patterns use different accidentals); a feat that would grow tiresome for an aspiring musician. For a professional performer minor adjustments (listed above) need to be made for an easier reading at sight.

Chapter 4 – ‘The Lincolnshire Hills’

The Lincolnshire Hills presents a simple yet effective piece of piano music. However, due to a variety of issues with notation, the music is left on the page as a series of notes without context. A first reading of the score was without issue as notes were clearly presented in a legible manner. Issues were encountered when the dynamic contour and articulation were considered, due to markings not apparent or illustrated on the score. This created a largely approximated performance based entirely on performer’s intuition.

The piece was composed in a total of 174 bars; certain allowances were made for this due to errors in the stated meter. It is believed that the music was written incorrectly in double-time. This issue can be addressed by rewriting the piece with halved time values (See Figure 1 and Figure 2, below) halving the total bars to 87. The inclusion of a metronome mark is not entirely necessary but useful to gauge what sense of *allegro* is required; in such a case the marking should be bracketed to illustrate an allowance for leniency and freedom in tempi interpretation.



Figure 1 - Opening bars of '*Lincolnshire Hills*'



Figure 2 - Opening bars of '*Lincolnshire Hills*' re-written

From the perspective of an aspirant musician this piece meets all criterion. The score is presented in a comprehensive enough manner that would not discourage a student performer; familiar shapes and sounds make the piece an appealing venture for any musician. The only deterrent would be the perceived length; in its current state (174 bars spanning 6 pages), it might be perceived as daunting for a novice. However, all issues can be addressed via the means stated above. Before syndication this piece needs minor adjustments and revisions to make a reading more favourable.

Chapter 5 – ‘Distant Visions’ and ‘Edgy Displacement’

Miniatures, *Distant Visions* and *Edgy Displacement* were selected from a set of pieces titled *Miniatures*. The two selected pieces were more befitting the projects, with *Power Struggle*, the third miniature in the set, featuring music requiring an adept level of technical proficiency; this ultimately resulted in its omission.

A statement from the composer confirmed that these pieces were not specifically written for the project. However, after perusal of the scores, the selected pieces each had unique qualities that compensated for this. Both of the selected scores were neatly presented with a keen attention to detail. A comprehensive first reading of the material was achieved due to the composer’s intentions stated clearly within the music and various annotations across the score.

Minor criticisms of the music’s engraving include: the distance between right-hand and left-hand staves in all submitted pieces; the engraving size is too small with a need for an increase, allowing an easier reading at sight; cross-staff beaming and inconsistencies in rest-measures causing confusion during reading (specifically bars 9, 11, 14 and 16-18).

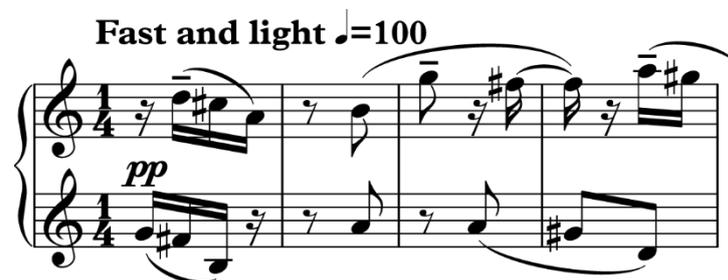


Figure 3- Opening bars of 'Edgy Displacement'

The meter 1_4 in *Edgy Displacement* is problematic due to heavy syncopation and the current meter not giving sufficient indication of beat for the quintuplet and triplet figures featured later on (See Figure 3, page 7). Two pragmatic solutions (See Figure 4 and Figure 5, below) would be: a) revision of the meter to 4_{16} allowing the performer to get a firmer grasp on the movement and time within the piece; b) omitting a metre and bars entirely favouring the phrasal shapes with brief pauses in-between.

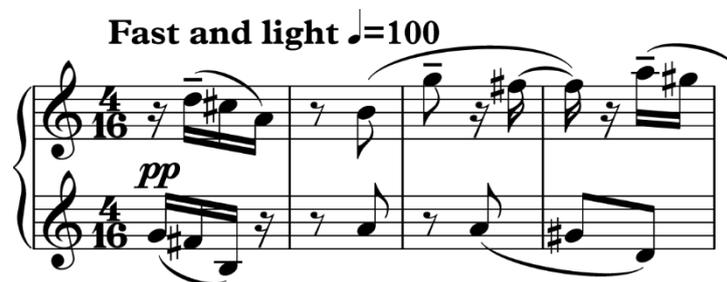


Figure 4- Opening bars of '*Edgy Displacement*' (revision 1)

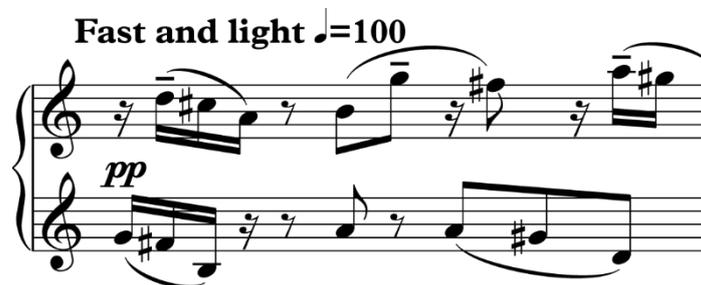


Figure 5 - Opening bars of '*Edgy Displacement*' (revision 2)

From the perspective of an aspirant musician, reading the hemi-demi-semi-quavers in *Distant Visions* could be considered daunting. This can be addressed by using quaver cue-size grace-notes suggesting the same musical shape but in a more approachable manner (See Figure 12 - Extract from '*Im Wald Allstund*' demonstrating a compositional reworking, page 22). Overall, these pieces could be performed by an aspirant musician who has developed a degree of technical capability though difficulties will arise due to minor notation and engraving issues; these issues will need to be addressed and revised before presentation.

Chapter 6 – ‘Number One’

Number One was the first in a collection of three pieces: *Dylan Number One*, *Dylan Number Two*, and *Dylan Number Three*. The prefix ‘Dylan’ was removed from the title as it was felt to be inappropriate in this context. The title of a piece of music gives the performer and any listeners a complete understanding of the subject matter within the music itself; in this instance including the performer's name did not achieve this. A suggestion would be to use the descriptions on the score of the music as movement titles with the collection titled ‘*For Dylan*’. This would give an uninitiated performer or listener a clear understanding of what the three pieces are trying to capture within the music. An example is given below:

For Dylan	[REDACTED]
I. Wistful	(b. [REDACTED])
II. Calls to Attention	
III. Spikey	

Figure 6 - Example extract from programme illustrating reworking of the piece's various titles

The score was neatly presented with detail given to articulation and dynamic markings. Explicit use of pedalling marks were included but were not entirely necessary given the style of the composition. This resulted in confusion in regards to what the composer's intentions require the performer to do. Large sections were notated to be played with the pedal held down without use of *Sempre Pedale* to highlight the sound quality intended, and the difference between regular pedalling and *laissez vibrer*.

A well-received performance of the piece was achieved with a pleasing response from the focus group of aspirant musicians. A minor criticism would be the spacing of the systems; more attention could be given to the spacing to avoid pages with one system. Minor adjustments need to be made to this piece before final presentation to an aspirant musician.

Chapter 7 – ‘By Fumbling, Found: IV. Duo’

The first of three piano-duets featured in the project, *Duo* was the fourth movement from a larger suite of pieces titled *By Fumbling, Found*. The composer stated that the set of pieces were purposefully written for a student and their teacher to perform. This suggests that the music was written specifically for the project; this was confirmed after perusal of the score. As the final piece in the suite, this movement gave sufficient closure to be performed in isolation.

The score was detailed and neatly presented with annotations included for added clarity in regards to the composer’s intentions. Given the nature of the piece – a duo – landscape page formatting can be deemed appropriate due to both performers interacting with the same instrument. Problems might be encountered logistically when performing all movements together, due to other movements requiring solo performances. This would prompt performers to modify the performance space by moving the piano stools in preparation for a solo-performance. This visually and audibly breaks the delicate atmosphere within the music, making a statement to audience members that each movement is a separate piece of music.

The scoring of the music can be subject to misinterpretation as a result of the variation in orchestration of the main thematic material. A specific example of this can be found in bars 2 and 3 of the *secondo* (*Piano 2*) right-hand, which, is repeated in bar 6 (See Figure 7 and Figure 8, page 12). Though the material is syncopated in the second appearance, it is largely the same but orchestrated in such a way as to suggest they are not. Paying attention to this detail would suggest that the two examples should be performed in an entirely different manner; a nuance that would most-likely be overlooked by an aspirant musician.



Figure 7 - Rhythmic variation extract 1



Figure 8 - Rhythmic variation extract 2

The music is almost entirely contrapuntal with exception to the final seven bars where both *primo* (*Piano 1*) and *secondo* (*Piano 2*) perform chords in unison. The contrapuntal writing, though effective, lacks synergy and is arranged in such a way as to suggest that each performer's hands were separate instruments. Though effective in the demonstrated sound-world after a performance and recording, this minor detail creates larger issues when considered pragmatically for aspirant musicians.

In solo performance, given the slower metronome mark ($\text{♩} = 52$), and implied atmosphere, these problems might be overcome with slight *rubato* to allow for any difficulties. However, in an ensemble discipline the syncopations make performance troublesome; a simple reading at sight would not be without error in regards to timing and fluency.

The music is effective and creates a sufficiently emotive soundscape to captivate an audience. The suite would benefit from all movements being given a title more descriptive of what they contain and how they relate to the "exploration of bell-like sounds and textures" stated in the music's appraisal. Currently, the titles of the movements weigh more importance to what they entail as a solo or duet.

Due to the problems encountered during preparation and performance, it can be deemed that this piece would be difficult for any aspirant musicians and would require an assured degree of proficiency to perform. However, the suite would make an effective piece of concert music for professionals.

Chapter 8 – ‘Nothing New’

Nothing New is an ambitious and effective piece of music creating an interesting series of shapes and sounds. The music was presented clearly with sufficient clarity to what a performance would require. However, perusal of the submitted score suggests that the music was not written for aspirant musicians and was intended for a concert-setting due to the use of two pianos or electronics. The music embodies a melody that is performed with an echo moments later, creating an intriguing sound-world of reverberations. This would be difficult to recreate outside of a concert-setting due to the requirement of electronics or a second piano (and performer).

Despite the concert-setting requirement, the music is not overwhelmingly difficult and should not deter an aspirant musician to perform the piece as a soloist. The problems encountered would be limited to the creation of an echo via implementation of electronics or a second performer. Use of electronics would solve the majority of performance issues but due to limitations of readily available recording equipment, potential for a repeat performance is greatly diminished with exception to professional musicians who are already performing music of this nature.

The delicate nature of the music requires accomplished performers who are assured and confident in their performance ability, as even the slightest deviation from the presented text creates obvious blemishes in the intended sound; this ultimately leads to the exclusion of aspirant musicians. A recommendation would be to omit the cued-sized staff titled ‘Echo’, and stipulate that the piece is performed solo, with the electronics requirements stated as currently written on the score. This would allow for fewer variables in the performance process with apparent risk for blemishes limited to the sole-performer’s interaction with the music.

Chapter 9 – ‘Dodeca-Mambo’

An exemplary display of compositional craftsmanship and sympathy towards needed clarity, *Dodeca Mambo* illustrates a perfect example of contemporary music accessible to aspirant musicians. With little clutter and attention to detail, the score was neatly presented with clear illustration of what a performance would require and what intentions were to be met.

With relatively few notes, the music would be attractive to aspirant musicians. The only drawback would be the stated metronome mark ($\text{♩} = 170$) which might be unrealistic for aspirant musicians and requiring a large amount of familiarity by professional musicians. This piece would make a fitting addition to any musician’s repertory and is without need for revision before presentation to aspirant musicians.

Chapter 10 – ‘Solitaire and Computer Keyboard’

Solitaire and *Computer Keyboard* were taken from a set of eight pieces titled *A Natural History of the Computer* aimed at people ranging from grade 1 to grade 5 playing ability. Both pieces are exemplary compositions intended for performance by aspirant musicians. The scores were neatly presented with keen attention to detail and performance direction.

Though both pieces presented are compositionally well-constructed, there are minor criticisms of the orchestration relating specifically to arrangement of material on the page. Bars 19 to 22 of *Solitaire* feature descriptive text that might confuse an aspirant musician. However, an explanation from a mentor or tutor would have sufficient context; this would not affect the performance of the music. The second system on page two of *Solitaire* would benefit from a reduction in height as the distance and change of shape interrupts fluent sight-reading. In *Computer Keyboard* the beaming of notes is inconsistent, specifically referring to bars 3, 4 and 7 (See Figure 9 and Figure 10, below). However, this is purely a minor grievance in regards to aesthetics and does not affect the music as a whole.



Figure 9- Bar 3 of ‘Computer Keyboard’



Figure 10 - Bar 3 of ‘Computer Keyboard’ (Revised)

The contrast between the two pieces performed creates sufficient variety in regards to the character and mood of the music potentially captivating aspirant musicians. Both pieces were successfully performed in the concert with *Solitaire* elected and performed by a student at *Grade 1* playing-ability. Given the clarity and accessible nature of the music, these pieces can be presented to aspirant musicians but would need minor adjustments in regards to page formatting and aesthetics.

Chapter 11 – ‘Lament of the Cactus’ and ‘Fives and Fifths’

Two favourites among the focus group of aspirant musicians, *Lament of the Cactus* and *Fives and Fifths* are two contrasting but equally exemplary contributions to the project. *Lament of the Cactus* was elected by a student at *Grade 2* playing-ability for performance at the concert. It is worth noting that the student would have liked to perform both pieces, but, a lack of confidence resulted in them not pursuing both pieces simultaneously; given the four-week preparation limit, this is understandable.

Lament of the Cactus is set in F-sharp minor but features an abundance of chromaticisms creating a sonorously plaintive and eerie sound-world. The final eight bars are written in a three-staff system configuration justified by the use of hand crossing. It was included for added clarity that might have been lost if the left-hand cross-over chords were notated in the conventional two-staff configuration.

Featuring bare-fifth harmony throughout, the aptly named *Fives and Fifths* explores the more reflective qualities of the piano. Set in an A-flat major key-signature the piece is largely diatonic, amplified by the bare-fifth resonant base chords giving the piano’s tone a soothing quality.

Both scores were neatly presented and had been given a substantial amount of attention to clarity of the intentions. The descriptive titles give potential performers and listeners an idea of what to expect. Both pieces were received well by the audience and the focus group of aspirant musicians and do not require revision or editing before any publication or syndication.

Chapter 12 – ‘A Rustic Dance’

A Rustic Dance is the first in a set of pieces from *Tonal Tunes and Modal Melodies*. A reworking of an earlier piece of the same name, the music was not specifically written for the project but was refined to be featured. The music is set in G major and features modulations to the various related key-signatures with an abundance of chromatic harmony making for interesting tonal exploration.

With familiar shapes and sounds this piece was well received by the focus group of aspirant musicians. However, the chordal writing might be challenging for the less technically proficient; specifically referring to the passages with consecutive thirds and chords, all written to be performed in quick succession. The score was generally well presented with exception to a few notes which escaped the reworking process, namely: a cautionary accidental (bar 25); and an F-sharp written in ledger-lines in the left-hand part that is to be taken with the right-hand, illustrated by a bracket.

Overall the piece is effective and well written; nevertheless, the score could benefit from a practicality edit for readability. Some figures are written in such a way that prevent a fluent first reading at sight due to notes favouring the theoretical harmonic position over the practical fingering. This is a result of strict four-part harmony figurations as opposed to orchestration favouring the practical hand positions.

During the concert the piece was performed at a slower tempo due to difficulties with reading and the pursuit for clarity in the performance, but this was later remedied in the recording due to a substantially longer period of time with the score. From the perspective of an aspirant performer the slower tempo would be more realistic. Minor details need to be addressed before this piece is presented to aspirant musicians.

Chapter 13 – ‘...open above me...’

A deeply atmospheric composition, *Open above me* (stylised: *...open above me... [sic]¹*) is an ethereal delve into minimalistic musical writing. It can be interpreted that the ellipsis in the title is directly linked to the open-ended nature of the music held within. Given the open interpretive notation, it is difficult to determine whether or not this piece was written specifically for aspirant musicians; it is likely that only the higher-ability aspirant musicians were being considered. That said, the content would be challenging for even an adept musician; not due to the notes performed, but performing them in the manner of the composer’s original intention. Given the interpretive score, there cannot be a definitive interpretation leading to ambiguities within aspirant musician’s performances.

The opening passage features a descending C-major scale through the lower octaves before the piece settles into the main thematic material. The rhythmic measures featured in the opening passage can be considered redundant as the music is without a time-signature or bar-lines; it would be better to include them in the manner found throughout the rest of the music (See Figure 11, below).

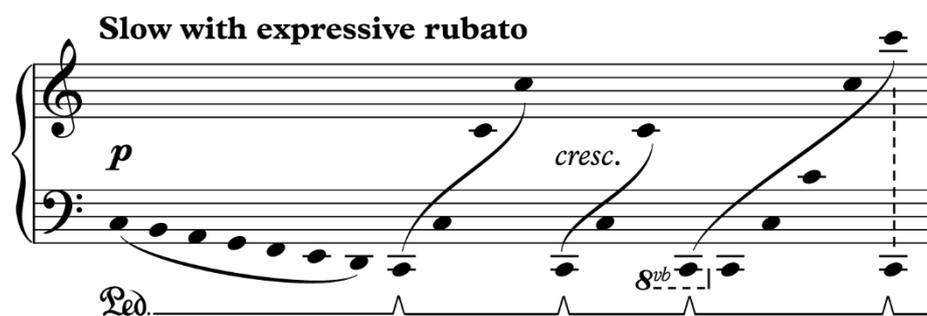


Figure 11 – Opening passage of ‘Open above me’ (revision)

¹ The use of ellipsis in the title is stylistic but relevant to the art within, and intentions of, the music.

A first reading of the music was problematic due to the extreme spacing of the notes which lead to issues with tracing and ambiguity in what was intended in regards to each measures' length. The inconsistency in note spacing led to errors in reading that were eventually remedied by familiarity.

A major criticism is the consistent use of isolated notes with more than three ledger-lines in harmonic-intervals over the tenth-degree; this rendered sight-read note recognition impractical, and required ledger-line counting to realise the notation. This can be addressed with the use of *al ottava* and *ottava basso*. A minor criticism was the use of the pedal marking that was eventually replaced with *simile*. This led to further ambiguity as musical shapes were not sufficiently similar during the later sections of the music to warrant its usage.

Though the piece was innovative, original and captivating at its fruition in performance, the scoring was lacking in sympathy to its elected performer (whosoever that may be; professional or aspirant). This would result in any potential performer being deterred by the difficulties in decoding what is intended; a product of insufficient editing, not poor composition. A suggestion would be to re-visit the music with a focus solely on the editing for accessible reading.

Chapter 14 – ‘Andalusian Dance’

Utilizing the piano’s more rhythmic qualities, *Andalusian Dance* takes the listener through a series of Latin influences and colours via elements of flamenco writing in the key of A minor. The piece was not specifically written for the project but contained redeeming qualities that would appeal to any aspirant musician.

The score was detailed and well presented with a large amount of effort given to performance indications. Minor criticisms arise in regards to page aesthetics, specifically: hairpin markings spanning longer than a single bar would be better illustrated as *cresc.* or *dim.* for a more efficient use of space; use of *tenuto* markings to differentiate articulation in the engraving of similar phrasal patterns (bars 1 and 2, left-hand, respectively).

Although the music is not too difficult, there are certain aspects of the chordal writing that would make the music more challenging to an inexperienced musician. Some figures could benefit from note-thinning, and a revision of the inversions used within chordal shapes to make them better fit the hand. A reworking of some of these shapes would make the music more accessible; in particular to pianists with a smaller hand-span.

A first reading of the piece was achieved without issue, with the music being well received by the focus group of musicians, and audience later in the concert performance. Minor details (mentioned above) could benefit from a small amount of revision. However, these issues would not affect a repeat performance or study of the music by aspirant musicians.

Chapter 15 – ‘Im Wald Allstund’ and ‘Denn der See liegt heiter im Sonnenglanz’

Im Wald Allstund (in[sic]² the woods at all hours) and *Denn der See liegt heiter im Sonnenglanz* (then[sic] the sea lies quietly in the sunshine) are two pieces from a set of pieces titled *Ländliches Lied* (*Songs of the Countryside*). The pieces together make up the last of the three piano-duets submitted to the project. The final piece in the set, *Glüh-Wurmchen trägt das laternchen vor* (*Fireflies carrying their lanterns before them*), was omitted for performance as it required the use of percussion. The selected pieces were chosen by a student at *Grade 2* playing-ability for performance in the concert alongside their teacher; a performance was successfully achieved. In the appraisal, the composer stated:

“This work was inspired by Schumann’s vocal duet *Ländliches Lied*, which describes the activities of [nineteenth-century] country-folk as they prepare for a spring dance. Each title is a quotation from the text (Emanuel von Geibel), concentrating on the descriptions of nature rather than on the human activity. ...”

The composer’s statement gives context to the titles of the pieces being presented in German. However, this would also exclude any potential performers of the music, in particular when considering that the music is written for performance by English speaking musicians. It would be more beneficial to write the titles of the music in English or with an English translation on the presented page (See Figure 12, page 22). This would also result in a unique title, making this work more identifiable as, a separate piece of music which is linked to the original work by Schumann, rather than, a potentially mistaken arrangement of the source material.

² The translated title of the music is taken as written by the composer without capitalisation.

Though the music created an effective performance that was well received by the audience, it suffered multiple issues during the process of preparation. The scores were well-detailed with ample instructions regarding the composer's intentions; however, the presentation hindered realisation in practise. The music was written for a piano duet intended for performance on single piano, but, on closer inspection some of the illustrated use of *tessitura* warranted a need for two pianos in terms of logistics.

The majority of the music featured content in the upper-registers for both performers resulting in physically awkward positioning at a single piano. Un-uniformed page formatting led to errors and lengthy time finding lead-in measures from which to continue. A direct result of this was a lack of cohesion due to both parts being printed on separate sheets. A reworking of note distribution and score engraving to a single page (See Figure 12, below), and inclusion of rehearsal marks would further remedy these problems.

1. Im Wald Allstund
"In the woods"
ed. Dylan Christopher

Moderate, with a delicate touch
♩ = 72

The image shows a musical score extract for 'Im Wald Allstund' in G major, 3/4 time. It consists of two staves: Primo (top) and Secondo (bottom). The tempo is 'Moderate, with a delicate touch' at 72 beats per minute. The Primo staff begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic, followed by a piano (*p*) dynamic, and then returns to mezzo-piano (*mp*). The Secondo staff begins with piano (*p*), then mezzo-piano (*mp*), and ends with piano (*p*). A rehearsal mark 'L.V. Senza Ped.' is placed above the first measure of the Secondo staff. The score concludes with a triplet of eighth notes in the final measure of the Secondo staff.

Figure 12 - Extract from 'Im Wald Allstund' demonstrating a compositional reworking

then[sic] the sea lies quietly in the sunshine, the second movement, was conventionally written and was not affected by the issues mentioned previously. The music was grounded in rhythmic unison with each performer's part moving in time according to the overarching pulse. *In the woods at all hours*, the first movement, was written to generate an atmospheric performance that succeeded overall, however, owing to the engraving issues mentioned, execution was problematic in performance and preparation. The performance relied heavily on interpretation and performers intuition. The selected music was largely successfully performed in the concert but could benefit from a reworking before presentation to aspirant musicians.

Chapter 16 – ‘Snowflakes’

An exemplary contribution to the project, *Snowflakes* is a programmatic piece that explores the piano’s singing qualities allowing for a study into *cantabile* playing and chordal voicing. This piece was immediately elected by a student at *Grade 5* playing-ability, who stated that the familiar shapes made the piece accessible.

The initial and concert performance of the music by the student performer was under tempo. Retrospectively, the composer stated that the indication of a metronome-mark might have helped address this issue. Unfortunately, the slower tempo was a result of unfamiliarity and a lack of confidence towards the student’s own readiness intensified by limited preparation time (four weeks); though a marking would still have been useful.

An immediate sense of the atmosphere is given by the title, *Snowflakes*, drawing the attention of the performer and any listeners from the outset. Set in a C-minor tonality, the music evokes a mournful atmosphere with flurries of quavers describing an equally fitting metaphor of howling-wind. The music overall gives relatively few challenges to overcome visually, physically or practically due to the clean notation and legible indications. A minor criticism is the explicit use of pedal markings, which, given the style of the music, would be more intuitive to the individual performer not needing illustration; with exception to the bars that specifically require *laissez vibrer*. A few minor adjustments need to be made to the score before syndication.

Chapter 17 – ‘Sonata No. 2: Allegretto’

Taking heavy influence from romanticism and traditional piano-writing, *Allegretto* is the second movement of a piano sonata. Though the material would be consciously aimed at aspirant musicians with an assured sense of technique, the music delivers a familiar sound-world that would capture the attention of any potential performer or audience members.

Set in a C-sharp minor tonality, the music draws heavily from influences and colours present in Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Prelude in C-sharp minor*, a stimulus noted in the composer's appraisal. This specific movement (*Allegretto*), was chosen for performance due to its slower tempo and less demanding thematic content; attributes that would make it accessible to aspirant musicians.

The score is generally neatly presented with attention given to the sounds intended to be performed. A first reading was without issue but a few minor scoring details detracted from fluent tracing, including: explicit pedalling marks, a detail now standardised in the implied style of writing; tempo markings positioned in a central location of the system. The music could benefit from slurring, articulation and more dynamic detail, which, due to omission, were consequently heavily approximated by performer's intuition.

The musical content is without fault and would appeal to both aspirant and professional musicians. The former, due to the familiar thematic content; the latter, as an easily programmed piece that would be used as light respite between more challenging standard repertoire. However, the music on the whole (including the other unfeatured movements) would benefit from an aesthetics edit before syndication; an issue with presentation and page-formatting, not the overall compositional content.

Chapter 18 – ‘Air Suite’

An ambitious and engaging piece of contemporary music, *Air Suite* generates an assortment of interesting shapes and sounds. Though it was not written specifically for the project, consideration was given due to the piece’s educational background and history.

Consisting of three movements, *Waltz*, *Air* and *Lament*, the suite delivers an intriguing mix of light and shade to the listener that, in performance, can be achieved to good end. However, the piece is not without its faults; specifically, the notation, which often hinders the true intentions being realised.

A first reading of the piece at sight was not achieved, due to difficulties in deciphering the music. This was a direct result of the score being party to heavy annotation outlining what the music is to entail; content that would be better placed in standard notation (a few examples include: the articulation, slurring, dynamics, tempo markings, repeat marks).

Frequent and un-needed in-system breaks resulted in diminished fluency when attempting to read at sight. There was little indication of metre throughout the piece, with exception to passages confined to *Waltz*, the first movement, which implied the music was to be performed in free time.

Air Suite

Tempo rubato ad lib.

(ca. ♩ = 90)

1. Waltz

ed. Dylan Christopher

The image displays a musical score for 'Air Suite' 1. Waltz, edited by Dylan Christopher. The score is written for piano and is in 4/4 time. It begins with the tempo marking 'Tempo rubato ad lib.' and a note value of approximately 90 (ca. ♩ = 90). The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 1-4) starts with a piano (pp) dynamic and a legato marking. The second system (measures 5-8) includes dynamic markings of crescendo (cresc.), mezzo-forte (mf), and piano (p), along with performance instructions for acceleration (accel.) and deceleration (rit.). The score features complex rhythmic patterns and phrasing, including a change in meter from 4/4 to 3/4 in the second system.

Figure 13 - Extract from 'Air Suite' demonstrating a compositional reworking

In its current state, the music within this piece is difficult to realise from the page; that said, the recordings and performance of the piece prove that there is music to be enjoyed by listeners. However, if the information is not clearly written in a manner in which performers can actively interact with, a reduction in the integrity of the music will be suffered.

A recommendation would be to rework the entire piece with the aim of making the score clearer to understand in standardized notation (See Figure 13, above). In its current iteration, this piece would not be considered accessible to aspirant musicians and would be problematic to a professional performer.

Chapter 19 – ‘Seventh Heaven’

Exploring irregular time signatures, *Seventh Heaven* is an exemplary piece of accessible contemporary music. The harmonic writing is based in convention giving any potential performer the foundations for a pursuit. The music is set in a G major tonality which later modulates to the tertiary related E-flat major.

This piece was not specifically written for the project, however it was later reworked; the final product making a worthy contribution. The score is neatly presented with enough performance markings to make intentions clear. A keen attention to detail keeps the score clutter-free with only necessary markings present on the page.

From the perspective of an aspirant musician the score would not be a deterrent, however the technical challenges within the music would make this piece accessible only to the more proficient of aspirant musicians. Another potential for difficulties could arise due to the E-flat major key signature. With advice from a tutor or mentor, this would soon be addressed. The music presented in this piece is not needing of any revision before syndication with aspirant musicians.

Chapter 20 – Conclusions

This report has allowed for an in-depth review of the music featured within the *Piano Project 2014* and the various elements that make music accessible for aspirant musicians. The process of preparation and performance of the selected pieces of music featured in the project has allowed a number of conclusions to be reached.

The first and foremost conclusion gained from reviewing all of the pieces submitted to the project is the importance of page aesthetics. This is referring to: page layout, formatting, note-spacing, and legibility, of the content presented within a musical score. The perceived accessibility of a piece can sometimes be wrongly determined as ‘more-difficult’ due to awkward spacing and alignment. Furthermore, this has a dramatic effect psychologically on any potential performer as a direct result of information that could otherwise easily be performed being presented in such a way that ultimately leads to confusion.

Another conclusion, partially linked to the above, that has an effect on a scores accessibility is the composer’s bias to the source material. It would be fair to assume that more time spent with concepts and objects leads to familiarity. Shapes that would be awkward to read on a first play-through no longer have the same sense of awkwardness or impact on the composer due to significant time spent with them. This results in a reduced incentive to rework material in a more efficient manner due to those shapes not being readily recognisable as un-accessible. A solution for this might be a regular reading by a third party to ensure scores maintain a level of unbiased writing.

Music notation is held to a specific set of standards that exist for the sole purpose of maintaining an acceptable level of music engraving that is uniform across styles and disciplines. This allows musical ideas to be exchanged between individuals with the intention of creating a musical performance. It is understood that the limits of standard notation does not allow for the vast array of actions that have been invented in recent years. Nevertheless, these new extensions are in fact held to their own set of standardisations; these are commonly referred to as *Extended Techniques*.

The pieces that were more successful in their execution upheld these standards using methods of notation that are already established as *standardised notation* (including standardised technical extensions). Pieces that were less successful often displayed musical engraving that convoluted the original intentions by use of overstated text and un-standardised figuring that could be demonstrated in standard notations.

The composer and performer of a piece of music must be in alignment in order to achieve the music's main intentions. This is achieved via use of the score; if the score is not presented in such a way that makes the intentions clear in the simplest form possible, the original goals and intentions will be lost. Furthermore, this makes pursuit of the music unattainable to aspirant musicians who would still be developing a technique in reading standard notations.

An analogy of this would be a person in the process of learning to read a specific language confronted with words spelled in phonetics using incorrect or non-standard grammar. They would have difficulty interpreting the wording, thus reducing their understanding of the material. A recommendation for any project of this nature in the future would be to work with composers during the engraving process before submission to ensure the music is both true to the intentions and accessible in practise.

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