

Book Reviews

From Rags to Riches

For Piano Solo

Composer: Beverly Porter

Publisher: redleafpianoworks.com

Reviewed by: Peggy L'Hoir

This is an inspiring collection of wisely written piano solos featuring many styles for Grades 1-4.

Each piece is accessible to the average student, incorporating a variety of genres from Jazz (*Jazzamtazz*) to Classical (*Courtly Dance*) to Impressionistic (*Chimes in the Mist*) while being student and audience friendly. Every composition has a technical and/or musical challenge. Especially clever (and fun for the student) are the use of ostinatos (*Chromatic Rag*), cross hands, impressionistic pedal, left hand melodies (*Rainy Day Song*, *Petit Waltz*), swing (*Get a Move On*) and rag styles (*Moondust Rag*).

From Rags to Riches is a book that has something for everyone. I look forward to using it in my studio! ❖

Land of the Silver Birch

Folk Songs for Piano Solo

Composer: Beverly Porter

beverlyporter.ca

Publisher: redleafpianoworks.com

Reviewed by: Peggy L'Hoir

Beverly Porter (redleafpianoworks.com/beverlyporter.ca)

Land of the Silver Birch is a series of impressive and unique piano solo arrangements of folk songs ranging in difficulty from elementary to intermediate.

Integrating pedal (*She's Like the Swallow*, *The Blooming Bright Star of Belle Isle*, *The Huron Carol*) beautiful melodies (*D'ou*

viens-tu bergere?), polyphony (*Vive la Canadienne!*), great energy (*Ah! Si Mon moine voulez danser!*, *Alouette*), scales and modes (*Land of the Silver Birch* – dorian mode/chromatic scale, *Acadian Lullaby* – pentatonic scale),

Lyrics for these folk songs are at the end of the book and the table of contents give a brief overview of the style and technical requirements of each piece.

This book succeeds in stimulating the imagination of the student and treating the ears of the audience! We are so fortunate to have compositions that are written by active teachers. Thanks Beverly! ❖

Industrial Revolutions Per Minute

Piano Trio – One Piano, Six Hands

Composer: Janet Gieck

Publisher: redleafpianoworks.com

Reviewed by: Peggy L'Hoir

This trio has been described by students as EXCITING, DIFFERENT, ENTERTAINING, AND FUNTASTIC!

I have had the privilege of teaching this to three adolescent females this fall. The rhythmic challenges, unique effects (slaps, knocks, and voice effects), and cool groove make it a fun to learn/ fun to perform trio for the intermediate performer. The laughter, counting, creativity and acute listening that has been instigated by this composition are a treasure!

Thanks, Janet, for creating a pedagogically sound trio that is musical, creative, and cool! A must have in all studios! ❖

Piano Poems

Composer: Susan Griesdale

Publisher: redleafpianoworks.com

Reviewed by: Audrey Watson

This collection of 9 piano pieces by Canadian composer Susan Griesdale is sure to delight the introspective pianist. The compositions are from about Gr. 4/5 to Gr. 8.

They are indeed little piano poems, which challenge the pianist to interpret the title through his/her playing. Some of the titles include, *Soliloquy*, *Sail Away*, *Remembering You*, *Forgotten*; these are delicate, soft pieces that require careful attention to phrasing and dynamics. For example, the tempo marking for *Forgotten* is "Very Slow, Heartbroken". This would appeal to many a teenager.

Some of my favorites are:

Antique Lace is a tender melody that begins in Bb+ and goes through a few key changes. It features some syncopated rhythms in both hands. Students will have to control the dynamics very carefully.

After the Rain is an excellent choice for introducing improvisation. The LH is written as long chords and the RH improvises with the given notes. A really cool piece and it is sure to appeal to many students.

Lavender Dreams is a reflective piece that flows easily between the hands. The LH features graceful broken chords that fit the hand well. It is written in F natural minor and teases the listener with the relative major.

The pieces from *Piano Poems* require a mature musical interpretation & would be suitable for an older student. ❖