I, Kristal Bang Kim, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano.

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Emma Lou Diemer’s Solo Piano Works Through 2010: A Study of Pedagogy and Performance in the Context of 20\textsuperscript{th}- and 21\textsuperscript{st}-Century Music Making

A document submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS in the Keyboard Studies Division of the College-Conservatory of Music

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ABSTRACT

The document presents a comprehensive survey of the solo piano works by an eminent contemporary woman composer Emma Lou Diemer, who is still alive and active as a musician of various roles, such as a composer, teacher, performer, and church musician. By keying into her representative solo piano works including her most recent output, the document’s primary goal is to guide performers and piano teachers for understanding and playing the composer’s piano works. Selected pedagogical and concert works will be given detailed analysis such as comparisons of styles, structures, and sonorities. In light of her collective output for piano literature, the significance of the composer’s contribution to the 20th- and 21st-Century music making, especially for the history of piano literature, is examined, in the context of current musical culture and trend.
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Last but not least, I thank my mother, a piano teacher and church musician, who had first opened my eyes to the world of music.
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Chapter I:

Emma Lou Diemer’s Background

A. Composer’s youth and education

On Thanksgiving morning of November 24, 1927, Emma Lou Diemer was born into a family of generations of educators and church musicians. Emma Lou’s mother, Myrtle Casebolt, was a teacher of kindergarten and first grade before marriage, and was also a good piano player and singer, who provided a musical environment for the family.¹ She often filled the house with her piano playing and singing, and taught children songs and hymnals to Emma Lou and her siblings. Emma’s father, George Willis Diemer, was the president of the Kansas City Teacher’s College at the time of the composer’s birth and was an advocate of well-rounded education of all subjects, including music and art. By the time Emma Lou was born, her siblings, Dorothy (sister), John, and George, Jr. (twin brothers), had all learned to play the piano and additional instruments; flute, cello, and trumpet, respectively. George Diemer’s granduncle, John Purdue, was the founder of Purdue University, and his parents and grandparents served as leaders of church music in the Midwest. Emma Lou’s maternal grandmother, Lizzie Casebolt, had worked as a church organist, and soon after the composer’s birth, she had moved in with the family to take care of the newborn.² With such family history and birth surrounding of educators and musicians, it can be said that Emma Lou’s future as an educator and (church)

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² Schlegel, 1-3.
musician could have been preset by nature and progressed by nurture, and that the composer’s appeal towards music and education seemed granted.

Indeed, Emma Lou Diemer was a child prodigy who loved music. For instance, at the age of five, she was able to reproduce Ignancy Paderewski’s *Minuet* after several hearings, and by six, her piano teacher, Mrs. Mabel Payton, was transcribing the aspiring composer’s first compositions of improvisations at the piano, such as *Church Bells* and *Santa Lost His Toy Bag.* She began performing in public from an early age, and the earliest record of her public appearance dates from when she was nine years old. By age thirteen, she had composed two piano concertos (in C minor and G minor, both no longer extant) among other keyboard works, and worked as a church organist. Diemer immersed herself in musical activity, stating “there was no time in my life that I didn’t love music and playing the piano,” and by age 15, Diemer decided to become “first of all a composer, and second a performer on piano as well as organ.”

In 1943, at the age of 15, Emma Lou started her study with Wiktor Labunski, the director and pianist at the Kansas City Conservatory, and at the same time, studied organ with Edna Scotten Billings at Central Missouri State University. At the time of the acceptance into the conservatory, Labunski remarked that it would be difficult for Emma Lou’s petite physics to meet the challenges of a concert pianist life, and such remark may

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3 According to Schlegel’s biography, because Diemer’s aural skill was excellent, Mrs. Payton did not initially teach her the musical notation until after Diemer was older.
4 “A Diemer Family Event: Farewells by the President and His Wife; Piano Numbers by Their 9-year-Old Daughter Emma Lou,” *The Kansas City Star,* August 1937.
have further concreted her priority as a composer, instead of a keyboardist. From this period, she began receiving awards from many state-sponsored or Glee Club-related functions, both as a performer and as a composer. Having graduated from high school in 1945 as class valedictorian, she enrolled at Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York to further her musical studies.

These trainings at the keyboard from her youth years had greatly influenced Emma Lou’s musical taste and compositional method. The composer openly admitted the influences of prominent keyboard composers such as Scarlatti, Chopin, Brahms, Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff, and Bartók in her compositions, as she grew up listening and playing the compositions of those composers. The influence of the late romantic composers especially seeps throughout all of her compositional periods, as much of her advanced level compositions, such as Preludes, Chromatic Fantasy, Seven Etudes and Fantasy for Piano, reveal neo-romantic sounds and concepts. In works like Preludes and Seven Etudes, stylistically specific reference to Rachmaninoff can be seen in romantic texture of beautiful melody set against wide left-hand arpeggiation, which recalls Rachmaninoff preludes. The influence of Brahms is found in heavy, full-textured orchestration in several piano works and also chamber works with piano, such as Sextet for Piano and Woodwind Quintet. The usage of brilliant rhythm, percussive articulations, obscured triads and tonality recall the impact of Prokofiev works, while the open sounds, emphasis on balanced structures, and simplicity and intensity in musical

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8 Schlegel, 6.
10 Outland, 9.
character point to Bartok’s influence.\textsuperscript{11} As seen by the specific influences thus far, the composers that Emma Lou had studied and practiced in her youth affected much of her general compositional style and character that can be seen throughout her entire oeuvre.

The influence of the keyboard training on her compositional methods is also alluded in an article she wrote, where she claimed that she has always been “very sensitive to harmony and to the colors of chords and progressions,”\textsuperscript{12} in her improvisation at the keyboard, which is a main compositional approach that Emma Lou uses. The skill, seemingly inherent to the composer, was doubtlessly acquired from the early trainings at the keyboard, as the instrument’s advantage of sounding several voices simultaneously guides the ear to trace more than one voice at a time, providing great listening training in harmony. More decisively, the composer stated in her letter to Joyanne Outland (one of the first scholars who had written extensively about Diemer and her works, and who is currently a professor at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne,) that she is:

\begin{quote}
 a firm believer in the composers as performer, and (her) method of composition in which improvisation at the piano plays a huge part in the inception and working out of any kind of musical work…puts that instrument at the “center of creation,” to use a grand phrase.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Consequently, her contribution to the works for solo piano or other keyboard instruments and the compositions that include keyboard instruments is great in number and significant in the composer’s entire oeuvre.

If the keyboard training from her youth had guided her musicality and instinctive compositional technique, her various post-secondary educations had solidified her compositional philosophy and finesse. During her college years, Emma Lou took lessons

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Outland, 10.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Outland, 15.
\end{itemize}
with several teachers. In 1945, during her first year at the Eastman School of Music, she studied theory with Wayne Barlow, composition with Edward Royce, and piano with Blair Cosman. In 1946, during the summer following the first year at Eastman School of Music, she went back to Kansas City Conservatory and studied composition with pianist Gardner Read, who had exposed Emma Lou to serial composition for the first time.\textsuperscript{14} In her sophomore year, she had transferred to Central Missouri State Teachers’ College, because her father, who was the president of the college at that time, had created a music program for Bachelor’s degree. However, she soon transferred to Yale University in hope of better compositional training.

It is during her study at Yale that Emma Lou had solidified some of her principal compositional styles and principles. Emma Lou studied with Richard Donovan, a Professor of Theory and Composition, but she was more influenced by Paul Hindemith (1895-1963), who was also teaching at Yale at that time, than her theory and composition teacher. Emma Lou had attended counterpoint classes given by Hindemith, and although she did not study composition with him—because she did not want to follow the fad of Hindemith influence at the time—his teachings had greatly impressed her, both in contrapuntal technique and the philosophy of \textit{Gebrauchmusik}.\textsuperscript{15} In the bio-bibliography that Ellen Grolman Schlegel had written, she quotes the following statement made by the composer:

\begin{quote}
I was in Hindemith’s classes in 2- and 3-art writing, and the linear style of counterpoint and integrity of the lines (each one making sense) made a tremendous impression on me, even though I didn’t want to write like [him]. [I also absorbed] the free tonality, the general avoidance of
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] Schlegel, 6.
\item[15] LePage, 60.
\end{footnotes}
really harsh dissonance, and the ability to write for any medium and any level of difficulty.\textsuperscript{16}

Emma Lou disliked to be categorized as belonging to a particular school of composition, such as neo-classicism, but as the above statement demonstrates, her works share much of the neo-classic traits that were accredited to Hindemith’s teaching, such as free tonality and counterpoint, ambiguous tonal center, and usage of traditional formal structures. Also, just as strong is the influence of the concept of \textit{Gebrauchmusik}, or “utility music,” which focuses on usefulness and tangibility of music, and such purposes permeate through almost all of Emma Lou’s works. Emma Lou admired Hindemith, who was a very versatile musician, capable on many instruments and skilled in conducting, and who wrote for all kinds of ensembles, ages, and competence. She took after his footstep and composed works not only for practical purposes, whether they be for performance, church, and teaching/learning, but also for people of all levels to enjoy. She claimed to have held the philosophy all of her life, as she devoted herself to “writing a lot of different kinds of music for different [media] on different levels of difficulty.”\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, two of Emma Lou’s main compositional traits, neo-classic\textsuperscript{18} writing and \textit{Gebrauchmusik}, are results from Hindemith. Emma Lou graduated in 1950 from Yale University with Master of Music Degree, after receiving her Bachelor of Music Degree in 1949 from the same school.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} Schlegel, 9.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Neo-classic movement in music, which occurred in early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, looked back at styles and structures of pre-Romantic eras, where great emphasis was placed on clarity, balance, and simplicity.
\textsuperscript{19} Schlegel, 8-9.
After several years of various professional activities, which will be discussed in the following section, Emma Lou enrolled in the Ph.D. program at the Eastman School of Music in composition. She had studied composition with Bernard Rogers and Howard Hanson, and organ with faculty artist David Craighead. Of the two composition teachers, Hanson was more influential as teacher; while Rogers further brought out neo-classic traits from Emma Lou, Hanson inspired her in his teaching itself. She remarked that he was capable of putting “emotion, even sentimentality, into music,” and that he could play and direct student works that were merely in progress, while other compositional teachers could not. Hanson also regarded Diemer highly, once commending Emma as “one of America’s most gifted women composers.” He placed most importance on the sound in a composition, in pleasant attributes of harmony and melody. He also avoided writing in the serial technique, which was a main stream method of composition in the 40s and 50s for many classical composers of the time, but which was also a factor that averted many from classical music. Many of Emma Lou’s works reflect such teachings of Hanson, especially in the relatively tonal harmony and melody that are not too stringent to ears, but easily accessible and appealing to broader audience. As Emma Lou identifies herself with the principle of accessibility, revealed in her statement, “My greatest pleasure is to write music that moves people, not that moves them out of the room,” Hanson’s teaching went hand in hand with Emma Lou’s focus of Gebrauchsmusik begotten from Hindemith’s teaching at Yale, by emphasizing the pleasantness in sounds to which people can connect and relate. Emma Lou received her Ph.D. in composition from Eastman in

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20 Ibid., 11.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
1960 with her dissertation composition, *Symphony on American Indian Themes*, the second movement of which Hanson conducted for its premiere with the Eastman-Rochester Orchestra in 1959. It was also Hanson that first suggested to Emma Lou to participate in the Young Composers’ Project, which was the most influential training ground to Diemer during her early career as a composer.

B. Composer’s professional activities and achievements/awards

Emma Lou’s life as a professional musician began after her Master of Music Degree in 1950 from Yale, and it entailed diverse musical occupations. She returned to her family in Warrensburg, Missouri, where she taught piano, organ, and counterpoint at Northeast Missouri State Teachers’ College in Kirksville, Missouri for a year, whilst she also composed and gave recitals. The piano works from these years are *Suite No.1 for Children*, *Suite No.2 for Children “At the Zoo,”* and *Winter*, from 1952.

During this period, she also received her first significant award as a musician, a Fulbright Fellowship, which had allowed her to study piano with André Dumortier and composition with Jean Absil at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, from September 1952 to June 1953 in Brussels, Belgium. This opportunity brought her exposure to much contemporary music and stimulated her creativity through quality studies and various concerts, and during this fellowship, the Emma Lou had developed much as a composer, producing a substantial work, such as her three-movement *Symphony No.1*. When she returned to the States in 1953, Emma Lou took a teaching position at the Annie Wright

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24 Schlegel, 9.
25 Schlegel, 10.
Seminary/Episcopal Girls’ School in Tacoma, Washington. She continued teaching piano and organ, as well as serving as a chapel organist and accompanist, while keeping up with her composition activities and recitals.

Emma Lou did not hold the position very long, as in 1954, she returned to Warrensburg, Missouri. Until she went back to school for her doctorate degree, she taught and held positions at various schools and churches, including Kansas City Conservatory, Park College in Parkville, William Jewell College in Liberty, and Central Presbyterian Church in Kansas City. At the same time, she continued to compose, and many noteworthy works came from the year 1954; *Suite for Orchestra* (Seesaw, 1981), for example, had won the Louisville Symphony Orchestra Student Award in the following year, Emma Lou becoming the second woman to ever receive the award.26

It was also during the summers of 1954 and 1955 that Emma Lou attended the Berkshire Music Festival in Tanglewood, where she encountered many young innovative composers like herself and got the opportunity to learn from a couple of very renowned composers. In the first year, she studied composition with Ernst Toch (1887-1964), whom she remembers as a fine pianist, and in the second year, she studied with Roger Sessions (1896-1985), who had much strength in teaching structure and motivic development in composition, which had influenced Emma Lou’s forms as well, especially for big works such as concertos and symphonies. The same year, Emma Lou composed *Second Suite for Piano* and *Piano Sonata No.2*, which reflect such structural tightness, and the latter composition had won the Missouri Federation of Music Clubs Award. Besides the awards that Emma Lou had achieved during her out-of-school years

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26 Ibid.
mentioned above, during her doctorate degree at Eastman, she had also won the 1959 Arthur Benjamin Award for Orchestral Music with an orchestral work, which became the second movement of her dissertation composition, the three-movement *Symphony on American Indian Themes*, completed in 1960.

All the professional activities and awards to this point strongly attest to Dr. Diemer’s growth and achievements as a composer, but, as mentioned above, the most influential musical venture in her life was the Young Composers’ Program (YCP, 1959-1961). Established by the Ford Foundation and the National Music Council, YCP was a new composer-in-residence program, where twelve composers were assigned to twelve school systems nationwide. Diemer was one of the twelve members in YCP’s inaugural year, the first and only female composer of the twelve to participate in the program. She was assigned to Arlington, Virginia, where three high schools and six junior high schools participated in the program. The program trained Diemer to become a truly *Gebrauchmusik* composer, writing numerous music for amateur orchestras and choirs. In regards to the Arlington years, Diemer states:

> I was able to reinforce a philosophy…learned at Yale under the Hindemith influence: that writing need not take place in a vacuum. It should not be written only to satisfy the aesthetics or mental exercises of a composer and his cohorts, nor to dazzle the givers of grants and fellowships. It should also be written to be listened to and finally understood and even enjoyed.\(^27\)

Consequently, the compositions from this period “avoided atonality, excessive use of accidentals and changes of meter, prolonged dissonance, complicated rhythms, extreme ranges,”\(^28\) taking into consideration that such features do not appeal to young students

\(^{27}\) Schlegel, 13.

\(^{28}\) Ibid.
and that they may interfere with apt learning for non-professional groups, who were often very limited in preparation time for concerts and events. Instead, she employed “considerable use of modal, diatonic writing, chords built on thirds, fourths and fifth, ostinato rhythms, [and] syncopations,”\(^{29}\) which often resulted in much more accessible sounds and ease in learning for the young musicians. These general characteristics in sound and principle surface in all of her composition beyond the Arlington period, reflecting the weight of the influence of the program on the composer.

Diemer’s performance in the program was stellar, resulting in the invitation to return to the YCP the following year, where she was the only composer of the twelve who was offered the honor. Furthermore, in 1964 she was asked to be a consultant for the program, which was then under the new name, Contemporary Music Project for Creativity in Music Education. The program was mutually beneficial, as Diemer confirmed her calling as a composer and her works started to reach broader audience. She stated, “I can find no experience which taught me more or was more appropriate for what I thought my calling in life was to me. My calling—my goal—was to be a composer…I was actually employed as a full-time composer of music and recognized in the community as such.”\(^{30}\) Unlike her previous professional activities, which involved more of teaching and accompanying, the program gave her an invaluable experience as a full time composer, training her to work with various ensembles and practical settings. By working with junior and senior high school music groups, she had learned to reach out to less advanced performers in her compositions.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.
\(^{30}\) Schlegel, 15.
The skill proved to be fruitful beyond the Arlington years, as her works became actively publicized after the finish of the program; the table of the composer’s piano oeuvre in Section IIA shows the publication record, clearly successful after the YCP. The Time Pictures, the first piano work to be published, is a good example that reveals the composer's mindset during the Arlington period, which focused on writing for amateur or developing performers. With regards to the compositions from the Arlington days, Diemer remarked, “By lowering somewhat the level of difficulty and extremity of style, I was able to produce some works that are still in the repertoire 35 years later.”31 It is also interesting to note that before the Arlington years, she had written more of advanced level works than compositions at lower level, and that despite their merits and recognition in the academia, her earlier works before the YCP remain almost entirely unpublished. The success in publication since the YCP in Arlington years further demonstrates how the program functioned as a milestone in the composer’s life, guiding her to become a composer capable of writing for non-professionals as well as professionals. Heard and sought after by broad range of musicians, Diemer had become “one of the most prolific and most published composers who participated in the program.”32

After the Arlington period, Diemer returned to teaching piano, theory, and composition at University of Maryland in College Park and serving as a church organist at Reformation Lutheran Church in Washington, D.C. With the return to more serious academic environment, Diemer went back briefly to composing more stylistically and

technically advanced compositions. For the piano repertoire, *Seven Etudes*, written for University of Maryland colleague Stewart Gordon, and *Four on a Row*, a serial piece, came from this time.

In 1971, Diemer took the position of Professor of Theory and Composition at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), and with the change of scenery came also a change in musical focus. Diemer took much interest in electronic music and expanded the electronic music lab and facility at UCSB, through several grants including the esteemed National Endowment for the Arts Composer Fellowship in electronic music. Accordingly, Diemer spent more time composing works for electronic mediums and incorporated electronic idioms in her compositions. In 1973, Diemer became the assistant director of the Electronic Music Lab at UCSB, now called CREATE, The Center for Research in Electronic Art Technology, which encourages furthering of electronic and multimedia music. Representative piano works that bear influences from the composer's electronic music phase are *Toccata for Piano* (1979), *Space Suite* (1988), and *Adventures in Sound* (1989), all of which use extended techniques that evoke digital sounds. Even after the electronic period, many other works show traces of influences of electronic music, as will be shown in several works to be discussed in later chapters.

For Diemer, the 70s and 80s were fruitful years in both production of compositions and reaping major recognition from public and academia. As a music faculty at UCSB from 1971 to 1991, Diemer brought much enhancement to the music curriculum in all areas including history, electronic and computer music, theory, and composition, creating new courses and forums for the department's growth. At the same time, she composed and performed actively the region, where by the mid 70s, over one
hundred of her compositions were published and by 1980, several works of her choral and organ compositions especially, became standard repertoire in public schools, churches, and festivals. Also concurrently, she held positions at local churches; at one of the churches, First Presbyterian Church, she has continued her service since 1984. In 1977, the Yale University School of Music Alumni Association awarded Diemer with a Certificate of Merit, commending her success as a composer, performer, and teacher, and recognizing her talent that caters the needs of a wide spectrum of performers, ranging from “children’s choruses to symphony orchestras, reflecting the breadth of your creativity and musical direction.” The remarks of adulation in the certificate well summarize Diemer’s consummate professional activities thus far, and conclude with the following acclamation: “For your dedication to the highest standards of music and teaching, the Yale school of Music Alumni Association is proud to award you its Certificate of Merit.”

Even after Diemer retired as Professor Emerita in 1991, she continued to compose, becoming one of the most widely published composers in the States. Furthermore, she became the composer-in-residence of the Santa Barbara Symphony under the conductor, Varujan Kojian, and she commented that the opportunity was “one of the most enjoyable composing experiences of her life.” In 1995, she was named the American Guild of Organists Composer of the Year and awarded the Mu Phi Award of Merit.

As of now, Diemer is in her eighties and still active in her musical endeavors. As recent as the past July 4th of 2011, she has given organ performances and presented her

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33 Schlegel 18.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid. 19.
organ compositions in a workshop held by Zimbel Press publishes at Christ Church Portola Valley in San Francisco, California. There are also several recordings of the composer herself at the piano in ensembles with various instrumentalists performing her works on the web, www.youtube.com, as recent as October 2009. She had also continued to write more music for piano, and some of her best works come from the post-retirement periods; for mature pianists, the Piano Sonata No. 3 from 1996-2000, has earned much popularity among pianists, and the Psalms for Piano from 2003-2005 is another extensive work, worthy of recognition. There are several compositions for intermediate and beginner levels that are also gaining attention amongst pedagogues and publishers, such as Reaching Out (2004), and the small pieces for Helen Marlais’ Contemporary Collage-Music of the 21st Century Series were written as recently as 2010.

Despite the official retirement from academia, Diermer's musical contribution is far from being retired; in the recent e-mail correspondence with the composer, when she was asked the question “Is there any plan in the future for another substantial solo piano work, besides the little learning pieces?” she answered, “I would certainly like to write another substantial solo piano work at some time.” And the same answer applies to her intention to write for any other instruments or ensembles, as she has been steadfastly producing works for all kinds of mediums. Once she had commented in an interview that she would like to be like Verdi, who continued writing music well into his eighties and produced “hit operas.”

Although she is yet to produce an opera, she is certainly living the statement of being an actively contributing musician, both as a composer and

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performer to present days, and her accomplishments as a composer, keyboard performer, educator, and a church musician have been well acknowledged and merited, firmly establishing her eminence in the contemporary music society.  

C. Chronological overview of the composer’s musical path

The various influences on the different musical phases of Emma Lou’s life are evidently demonstrated in the composer’s solo piano works. The composer’s musical path can be divided into three phases containing two sub-phases as the following: 1) EARLY YEARS (1945-1962): Formative Years (1945-1947) & Early Neo-classic Years (1948-55); 2) MIDDLE YEARS: Post Arlington Years (1961-1971) & Exploration Years (1971-1991); and 3) LATER YEARS: Eclectic Years (1991-1999) & Recent Years (2000-current). The teachings of several composers and teachers, the different surroundings of music environment, and Diemer’s varying professional involvements define these different phases.

The delineation of the works from the composer’s early years is made obvious by two factors: these are the works that come from the composer’s academic training years and also those that remain unpublished, spanning from 1945 with the *Preludes for Piano* to 1955 with the *Sonata No.2*. In her interview with Dennis P. Johns, the author of the dissertation “The Solo Piano Works of Emma Lou Diemer Through 1991,” she stated that she did not even try to publish the difficult pieces from this early period, and that the

38 There are two exceptions: *Monkey Dance* from *Suite No. 2 for Children* and *Suite No.1 for Children*, but these works were published after the early years, in 1986 and 2012 respectively.
easier works were not successful with publication.\textsuperscript{39} In a recent interview with the composer with regards to the reasons for the lack of publication of these works, she commented that at the time, she was a composer just starting out who had no connection in the publishing world, nor did she have “enough know-how.”\textsuperscript{40} Indeed, even \textit{Monkey Dance} out of the second \textit{Children’s Suite}, one of the two works published from this period, did not get published until 1986, well after the Arlington years, which is when she started writing her music aimed at broader audience, outside the academic realm, gaining recognizable public relation. \textit{Suite No.1 for Children} was also published, but only very recently, in 2012.

In other words, these early works show consciousness of trend and academic influences, more than any other pre-occupation, (such as the concern for reaching broader audience or \textit{Gebrauchmusik} philosophy, as will be seen in later phases) and despite the lack of public recognition, rewards from academia warrant the merit of these works. The composer readily admits direct influences of many past composers in her music, such as Scarlatti, Bach, Chopin, Brahms, Rachmaninoff, Debussy, Gershwin, Prokofiev, and Bartok, and especially in these early works, the traces of these celebrated composers are transparent, even through the derivatives of Diemer’s own interpretations. Thus, diverse compositional concepts of the past and current surface in explorative collages in these early creations, as the consistency and expressivity of the composer’s distinctive characters are in the making.


\textsuperscript{40} Diemer, e-mail message to the author, May 20\textsuperscript{th}, 2011.
From the stylistic perspective, the early works from this period can be further subdivided into formative years (1945-1947) and early neo-classic years (1948-55), with few exceptions. The former group (*Preludes for Piano*, *Chromatic Fantasy*, and *Suite No.1: Landscapes*) shows strong presence of impressionistic and programmatic contents, along with atonal explorations in sonority, which reflects the influence of the composer’s brief study with Gardner Read. The latter group (*Suite No.2, Sonata in One Movement*, *Suite No.1 for Children, Winter for Piano, Suite No.2 for Children*, and *Sonata No.2*) begins to show much more affinity towards neo-classic elements in writing, effected by Hindemith’s teaching from the composer’s Yale years.

Emma Lou took a break from writing music for solo piano from 1956 to 1960, which are the years including her doctorate study at Eastman (1957-1960) and participation in YCP in Arlington, Virginia (1959 &1960). During her doctorate study, she had written mostly sacred works, focusing on vocal, choral, and large ensemble works, where large portions of these overlap with the years at Arlington. In fact, compared to the preceding years, the works from 1959 and 1960 quadrupled in amount, clearly reflecting the variety of the demands and occasions presented through the YCP. Through the challenge the YCP had placed on the composer, which was to write easier works for available ensembles and their levels without losing the effectiveness or appeal of the music, the composer found it “easy to be complex and difficult, …harder to be lucid and technically within reach. I place much greater value on the latter of the two qualities.”

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41 LePage, 60.
the composer is transparent in all of her solo piano works from this phase onward, even
in the more advanced level works.

Thus, through the opportunities presented by the YCP in Arlington, Emma Lou
started to manifest her belief in *Gebrauchmusik* philosophy begotten from the Yale years
under the influence of Hindemith; the program often gave the select composers tasks that
involved writing for young students and amateur musicians in the local music
communities that were participating in the program. Accordingly, the composers in the
program needed to learn to write music for such needs, a skill that Emma Lou believed to
be important in a composer. She stated, “A composer needs to be challenged to write all
kinds of music for all kinds and levels of performers. I admire most the composers who
can write good music for beginners and also good music for the Vienna Philharmonic.
Limiting oneself to either one of these outlet shows little imagination.” 42 Such intention
is clear in her outputs of compositions from the middle period and beyond, as there are
works for all levels, from beginners to professional musicians.

The middle period for solo piano works properly begins in 1961, and it can also
be divided into two sub-periods: works from 1961-1971, to be called Post Arlington
Years, and works from 1971-1989, Exploration Years, with the composition in 1971
(*Sound Pictures*) overlapping in features. Diemer’s participation in YCP technically
finished in 1960, but she had kept good relation with the program thereafter, accepting to
be a consultant for the program, then under the new name, Contemporary Music Project
for Creativity in Music Education, as late as 1964. Consequently, the influence from the

Arlington years resonates strongly in her solo piano literature in the 60s, into the 70s, starting with *Time Pictures* in 1961, the first easy level solo piano work that Diemer had composed and published. Even in the intermediate and advanced level works such as *Four on a Row* and *Seven Etudes*, the *Gebrauchmusik* concept comes through strongly in the tangibility of the music, owing to the trainings of the Arlington years.

The Exploration years include compositions from 1971-1989. In these years, Dr. Diemer returned to programmatic concepts while exploring more avant-garde twentieth century methods, such as aleatoric writing and experimental techniques. The influence of the spread of the electronic music in the 70s, which the composer ardently promoted at UCSB, also surface strongly in several pieces for solo piano, as well as in ensemble works, such as *Trio for Flute, Oboe, Harpsichord and Tape* (1973), *Pianoharpsichordorgan* (1974), *Funfest* (1984), and *Rite of Summer for Piano and Tape* (1986). Overall, the period is characterized by “timbral exploration.”

The composer’s last period is an on-going one, dating from the year of her retirement from UCSB in 1991. With no more teaching duties, Diemer devoted even more energy in composing, and some of her most impressive compositions are from this period. The works in this period function as a catalogue of her style and sound, where the composer’s past years of various musical trainings, explorations, and experiences come together in solid and effortless poise, without compromising the extemporaneous nature of Diemer’s inherent improvisatory compositional method. The composer had once commented, “I take more satisfaction in producing a work which combines

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43 Outland, 15.
spontaneity with intellectual fervor,\textsuperscript{44} and such outlook is especially true in the late works of the composer.

Furthermore, the \textit{Gebrauchmusik} philosophy, which the composer embraced throughout her middle period, has further permeated through the entire last period, where specific purpose or musical usefulness of works are even more pronounced and diverse. For example, in this period, there are works written not only for pedagogy, concert, and for both of them as produced in the earlier periods, but there are also several sacred works for use in service, arrangements of holiday festivities and ceremonies, and works with religious references, functional for both service and concert. The variety also exists in the style, genre, and sound, as there were in the Exploration Years of the Middle Years, but they are always expressed within the accessible and appealable aural domain, keeping consistent to the \textit{Gebrauchmusik} principle. In short, the significant concepts of the compositions from this period are functionality, eclecticism, and accessibility, where all of these features center around the \textit{Gebrauchmusik} philosophy as their root.

Like the early and middle periods, the composer’s last period also can be divided into two periods, namely Eclectic Years, covering the works of the last decade of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, from the year 1991 to 2000, and Recent Years, consisting works from the 21\textsuperscript{st} century to the present. As soon as she retired from UCSB, Diemer took a position as the composer-in-residence at the Santa Barbara Symphony, and consequently, wrote a considerable number of orchestral and chamber works during this time. However, although the output for solo piano literature is not extensive from this decade, substantial

\textsuperscript{44} LePage, 60.
solo compositions for concert, such as the Piano Sonata No.3 and Fantasy for Piano, came from this time. Much more fusion of styles and sounds can be found in the works from this period, including neo-classic forms, neo-romantic sentiment, and various 20th-century idioms, such as minimalism, extended techniques, and serialism, where the blending takes place within tasteful balance of high art concepts and accessibility. Accordingly, the advanced level works from this period are increasingly sought after among the performers, especially the Piano Sonata No.3, and the intermediate level work, Three Pieces for Piano, also has received notable acclaim among the pedagogues.

Most extensive and practical sets make up the period of the Recent Years, gearing toward religious and pedagogical purposes with greater popular appeal. Works such as Spirituals for Piano and Psalms for Piano both consists of numerous individual movements with sacred tunes and Biblical references, and all of them can be used for religious service and or performance. Arrangements of old sacred songs and well-known tunes make up couple of the extensive collections, such as the Spirituals for Piano and Holidays for Piano, and while some new harmonies and unusual chromaticism bring freshness to the existing melodies, the familiarity clearly aims at reaching out to all listeners. Psalms for Piano is the lengthiest composition within the composer’s entire solo piano literature oeuvre, consisting of eighteen individual movements. Another copious set is Reaching Out, the most wide-range composition for pedagogy thus far. In the most recent years, she has written only pedagogical pieces, almost exclusively for FJH publisher, for piano pedagogue Helen Marlais’ series, Contemporary Collage-Music of the 21st Century. The only exception is A Waltz for Isolde, an intermediate level
performance piece, published by Certosa Verlag. In all of these works, similar collective and combinatorial features of the previous decade are also present, as well as preferred traits of all of the composer’s earlier compositional phases. The distinction is found in the presence of more specified purposes, stronger cohesion in the mixture of various musical concepts, and increased preference in tonal and consonant sonority overall.

For Emma Lou Diemer to have become the musician that she is today, all the necessary factors seemed to have worked together for her. Emma Lou’s naturally given musical talent began to show from her early childhood, and her surrounding environment encouraged her growth in music; many of her family members, including her siblings, mother, and grandmother, constantly made music around her, and her parents put great emphasis in music education. Numerous teachers, both eminent and unknown, had well-guided the cultivation of Emma Lou’s talent and skill in piano, organ, and composition, as well as the philosophy as a musician and educator. However, perhaps the most influential element in her success in becoming such a versatile musician that she is today is the composer’s untiring dedication for music. According to Schlegel, at one point in her young adult period, Emma Lou had forsaken the chance of marriage with a man who had ardently pursued her, because she had decided that the musical life that she had envisioned would demand all of her, whereas having a family would definitely bring restraints and compromises to her goals.\textsuperscript{45} Both her educational and professional activities afore mentioned thus far demonstrate how indeed she has led a full life as a comprehensive and versatile musician for all types of music making. She has dedicated

\textsuperscript{45} Schlegel, 29.
all of her life to music, and her life is a story of a constant music-making from the
beginning to the present.
Chapter 2:
Emma Lou Diemer’s Solo Piano Works

A. Compilation of the entire solo piano works

Diemer had written over thirty five works for solo piano. The table below provides the general information of all existing works—published and unpublished—including the year of composition, publication (if any,) movements, duration, and level of each work. The table does not include lost works written in her youth, (Church Bells, Santa Lost His Toy Bag written in 1934,\textsuperscript{46} and two piano concertos in C minor and G minor written in 1940,)\textsuperscript{47} and piano works written with electronic media, which are Funfest written in 1984, and Rite of Summer written in 1986. Both of these were written for piano and tape, and brief facts about Funfest will be presented later in this section, as it is a representative work of the electronic phase in the composer’s compositional growth. However, the works with electronic mediums are not included in the table below as they involve collaboration of electronic instruments and not written solely for the piano. The paragraphs following the table below will present other relevant and interesting information on each work. The titles with underlines will be further discussed in section III as representative works of the composer with various topics.

| Table 1. Chronological Overview of Unpublished and Published Solo Piano Works |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Unpublished                                             | Published             |
| Title                                                   | Year                  | Movements | Length | Level            | Title                                                   | Year & Publisher | Movements | Length | Level |

\textsuperscript{46} Schlegel, 3; Outland, 289.

\textsuperscript{47} Schlegel, 6; Outland, 289.
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<td>3. Suite No. 1:</td>
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<td>Landscapes</td>
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<td>Four Poems for Piano</td>
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<td>the Orchard</td>
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<td>II. Red River</td>
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<td>III. Usk</td>
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<td>4. Suite No. 2:</td>
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<td>I. Prelude,</td>
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<td>Moderately fast</td>
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<td>II. Fugue,</td>
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<td>Slow, ponderous</td>
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<td>III. Toccata,</td>
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<td>5. Sonata in One</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I. Minuet</td>
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<td></td>
<td>II. Lullaby</td>
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<td>III. March</td>
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<td>7. Winter for Piano</td>
<td>1952,</td>
<td>4 min.</td>
<td>Inter-</td>
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<td>September</td>
<td>March</td>
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<td>I. The Sad-Eyed</td>
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<td>Bear Cubs</td>
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<td>III. The Old Camel</td>
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<td>IV. Monkey Dance</td>
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<td>1952, July</td>
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<td>8. Suite No. 2 for</td>
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<td>Children “At the</td>
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<td>10. Time Pictures:</td>
<td>1961,</td>
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<td>Easy</td>
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<td>Four Studies in Time</td>
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<td>I. Govotte</td>
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<td>(For Terry)</td>
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<td>II. Gigue</td>
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<td>(For Alan)</td>
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<td>III. Invention</td>
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| **16. Seven Pieces for Marilyn (A Little of This and That)** | Written for Marilyn Skiöld | 1982, Certosa Verlag, p.2010 under the title *Seven Pieces für Klavier* | 1. A Little Sad  
2. A Little Fugue  
III. A Little Drumming  
IV. A Little Ragtime  
V. A Little Imaginatio  
VI. A Little Passacaglia  
VII. A Little Finale | 14 min. | Intermediate |
| **17. Little Toccata for Piano** | 1982 | 3 min. | Intermediate |
2. Over and Over  
3. Hazy Afternoon  
4. Jazz Echoes  
5. The Guitar  
6. Old Spanish town  
7. A Rainy Saturday  
8. In a High Steeple  
9. In a Deep Cave  
10. Contemplation  
11. Go Fourth  
12. Out of Africa  
13. The Kangaroo | 15 min. | Easy to Intermediate |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Commissioned by</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Wind in the West</td>
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| Mental Series | 22 Piano Sonata No. 3  
II. Interlude  
III. Tango Fantastique | 16 min. | Adv. |
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<tr>
<td>23. Hannukah Song</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2 min.</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
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</table>
2. My Lord! What a Morning  
3. There Is a Balm in Gilead  
4. Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child  
5. Every Time I Feel the Spirit  
6. Deep River  
7. Poor Wayfaring Stranger  
8. Guide My Feet  
9. Steal Away  
10. I’ve Got Peace Like a River  
11. Great Day  
12. He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands | 20 min. | Intermediate |
| 13. Let Us Break Bread Together |
| 14. Go, Tell It on the Mountain |
| 15. Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen |
| 16. Give Me Jesus |

| 25. *Holidays of the Year for Piano* |
| Dedicated to Dorothy Diemer Hendry and Wickliffe Byron Hendry |


| 1. Auld Lang Syne-New Year's Day |
| 2. Aria- St. Valentine's Day |
| 3. Now the Green Blade Riseth- Easter or Christmas |
| 4. That Easter Day With Joy Was Bright- Easter or Epiphany |
| 5. Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain- Easter |
| 6. Love Divine, All Loves Excelling- Weddings or General |
| 7. My Eyes Have Seen the Glory- Fourth of July or General |
| 8. O Beautiful For Spacious Skies- Fourth of July or General |
| 9. For All the Saints-All Saints Day |
| 10. We Gather Together-Thanksgiving |
| 11. O come, O Come Emmanuel-Advent |
| 12. Silent Night-Christmas |
| 13. Hanukkah Song-Hanukkah |
| 14. Ave Maria-Christmas or General |
| 15. Ding Dong Merrily on High-Christmas or General |

| 26. Psalms for Piano |
| Written for Joan DeVee Dixon |
| 2003-5, Dixon Broyles Productions, p.2005 |

| I.Ps.57:8 |
| II.Ps.15:1-2 |
| III.Ps.11:1 |
| IV.Ps.16:11 |
| V.Ps.26:8 |
| VI.Ps.4:7 |
| VII.Ps.40:3 |
| VIII. Ps.151:2 |
| IX.Ps.68:4 |
| X.Ps.34:1 |
| XI.Ps.62:8, 20:7, 124:8 |
| XII.Ps.120:7, Ps.59:2 |
| XIII.Ps.54:2, 86:7, 152:2 |
| XIV.Ps.69:3 |
| XV.Ps.55:6 |
| XVI.Ps.6:5 |
| XVII. Ps.141:2 |
| XVIII. Ps.30:5, 125:2, 87:3, 115:18 |

<p>| 30 min. Intermediate to Adv. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Reaching Out</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Angry March</td>
<td>2007</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Happy Thoughts</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>2 min.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Minimalisting and Thinking Back</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>3 min. 2 min.</td>
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</table>
Helen Marlais’  
Contemporary  
Collage-Music  
of the 21st  
Century, Vol.1,  
Book 3

| 31. A Waltz for Isolde  
Written for Isolde Weiermüller-Backes  
2010, Certosa Verlag, p.2010  
3 min.  Intermediate |
| 32. Bells on a Starry Night, Sailing on a Quiet Sea. We Won the Race  
2010, FJH, 2012  
2 min.  Easy |


a) Formative Years (1945-1947)

_Preludes for Piano_ (1945) is the earliest existing composition of Emma Lou Diemer, composed before she began her undergraduate study at Eastman School of Music.⁴⁸ The work demonstrates mixed influences of Rachmaninoff, Bartok, Debussy, and Gershwin in the twentieth-century language,⁴⁹ but the most prominent features are impressionistic idioms and techniques, such as chord planing, use of ostinatos and drones for pitch center, and the penchant for tone painting or atmospheric coloring rather than distinct melodic prominence.⁵⁰

_Chromatic Fantasy_ (1946) is the first solo piano work that represents the brief atonal phase in the composer’s musical path. The work comes from the composer’s first

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⁴⁸ Outland, 11.
⁴⁹ Ibid, 17.
⁵⁰ Ibid, 18.
year at Eastman, which is soon after the time when the composer’s encounter and training in atonal music had taken place. In the summer of 1946, Emma Lou studied with Gardner Read, who had encouraged atonal and serial composition to the composer. At the time, Emma Lou was “not familiar with 12-tone music,” and while studying with Read, she “decided to write music that avoided tonality.” The intention resonates substantially in Chromatic Fantasy, as well as in Suite No.1 to a lesser degree. However, the phase did not last long nor did it impact the composer’s growth greatly, as Emma Lou had returned writing with neo-tonal method, and most of her solo piano works beyond the phase stir away from the atonal style.

The title reveals well the sound and structure of the composition. Three main themes make up the multi-sectional structure that is characteristic of fantasy forms, containing areas of canonic writing, cadenza gestures, and toccata texture. The opening starts with a canon on a theme built with ascending chromatic notes followed by an upward tritone leap (Example 1). The other two themes used are elaborated fragments from this main theme, all involving the ascending chromatic motion. Outland’s dissertation discusses further on the form and features of the work.

Example 1. Chromatic Fantasy, mm. 1-3

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51 Outland, 7.
52 Diemer, “Chromatic Fantasy,” score, 1946, Davidson Library Department of Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara; used with permission from the composer.
The third work, *Suite No.1: Landscapes* written in 1947, is also known as *Four Poems for Piano*. It is the earliest solo piano work that refers to a specific literary source, and the first solo piano composition written during the composer master’s degree study of composition at Yale. The work still reflects her consciousness of the atonal trend of the time, as the overall sound is explorative with much stringency in dissonance, not reflective of Emma Lou’s later preferred voice of more consonant sounds. Also, much like the *Preludes for Piano*, there are programmatic titles for the movements, whose images she tries to portray. However, *Suite No.1* is more original in the depictions and also more detailed, as it corresponds to specific pictures from the poems.

b) **Early Neo-classic Years: (1948-55)**

*Suite No.2 for Piano* (1948) is a three-movement work that shows the composer’s early attempt in neo-classic style. Compared to the first suite for piano, the musical language in the second suite is much more fluid and less conscious in the use of dissonants, especially in the outer two movements. Each movement has a Baroque title, *Prelude, Fugue, and Toccata* respectively. The first two movements reflect more of the Baroque style of contrapuntal writing in 20th-century language, whereas the *Toccata*, although retaining the multi-sectional structure of Baroque toccatas, shows more of the 20th-century writing practice of the genre, namely the percussive use of the instrument to focus on the literal meaning of the genre, “to touch.”

Along with the fusion of various styles, *Toccata* in *Suite No.1* presages much of the composer’s other favorite compositional features, showing many of quintessential Diemer writing gestures: motor-rhythm, percussive use of piano, improvisatory profile of
the theme, hand-crossing, and extreme registers. The movement appears to be the earliest example that shows more of the composer’s improvisatory tendency and less of a premeditated quality, where the simple motives are varied via scalar movements and repetitions in different dynamic schemes and register changes. It can be noted that *Toccata* is a favorite genre of Diemer for the solo piano, as she had written many to come after this first one, making it possibly the most used genre/form in her solo piano oeuvre.⁵³

*Sonata in One Movement* (1952) was written during her third school year at Yale University. The work was submitted for the application for a Fulbright Fellowship, which the composer was granted. The sonata combines the multi-movement concept with the sonata-allegro form, where varying sections of the work can be interpreted as different movements, as well as exposition, development, and recapitulation, much like Liszt’s B minor *Sonata* and Prokofiev’s *Sonata No.3*. Main compositional technique used is motivic development, where the opening theme, which starts and finishes the work, appears in various different forms throughout the work, as does the contrasting second theme.

The first sonata is a bit out of place in this category of “Early Neo-classic works” in that the influences of Brahms and Prokofiev prevail, giving the work more of the neo-romantic qualities than neo-classic elements. From the opening and throughout the movement, Brahms’ influence is heard through the expansive chordal writing (Example 2).

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⁵³ There are five titled toccatas and several compositions that bear the characteristics of toccata.
The tribute is explicit and deliberate, as the composer comments that the first sonata is “dramatic and bold, with a Brahmsian sweep of range and texture.”\(^{55}\) Just as apparent is the influence of Prokofiev, as the composer was said to have been playing Prokofiev’s 7\(^{\text{th}}\) sonata at the time she was composing the sonata.\(^{56}\) The composer has expressed her fondness of Prokofiev’s writing, particularly in how he was capable of moving effectively from one key to another without modulation or transition,\(^{57}\) and Diemer uses the same technique of harmonic shifts without modulation between phrases in the sonata (Example 3).\(^{58}\)

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54 Diemer, “Sonata for Piano in One Movement,” score, 1952, Davidson Library Department of Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara; Examples 2 & 3 come from the same source and are used with permission from the composer.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
Also, much of the writing reveals percussive articulations of the instrument, reminiscent of the Prokofiev sonatas, along with other Prokofiev features such as polytonality and motoric drive, and these characteristics resurface repeatedly in Diemer’s later compositions.  

After her graduation with her Master’s degree from Yale in 1950, Emma Lou returned to her family in Warrensburg, Missouri, where she taught piano, organ, and counterpoint at Northeast Missouri State Teachers’ College in Kirksville, Missouri for a year before her study in Brussels in 1952. At this time, she also returned to explore more in composing in neo-classic style, producing three works in the same year 1952, the two suites for children and Winter for Piano. With regards to the 1952 works, Outland writes, “In the earliest neo-classic works, she seems to be feeling her way, exploring a different approach. The Suites for Children provided the perfect opportunity to simplify her ideas drastically, to get to the basics of a more traditional style. The same focusing occurs in the future works.” Thus the 1952 works, the composer’s first intermediate level series, are truer neo-classic works by the composer, along with the second piano sonata written

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59 Lin’s doctoral document, “Three Piano Sonatas by Emma Lou Diemer” written in 2007, is a good source that provides formal analysis and expansions on the influences of Brahms and Prokofiev.

60 Outland, 127.
later in 1955, which resonates much of Hindemith’s neo-classic style, particularly, Hindemith’s second sonata.

Written in February, 1952, the *Suite No. 1 for Children* was her first work during the teaching years back in Warrensburg Missouri. It is also the first work that shows the solidification of the neo-classic style more explicitly, especially in the formal and harmonic schemes. The work, along with the second suite, was premiered in Brussels in the fall of the same year, during the composer’s Fulbright study. In the instruction, Diemer writes that the pieces are “intended to be attractive…tonal, uncomplicated works” that bear enough but not “discouraging difficulty,” intended to be added to the repertoire for intermediate pianists. To assist in the intended musicality, she further instructs, “The Minuet and Lullaby should be played with graceful expression, and the March with appropriate rhythmic vigor.” Indeed, the entire suite is very attractive in its simplicity and enjoyable both to play and listen to. The work was just recently published in 2012 by a German publishing company, Certosa Verlag, and it would be a good addition to intermediate level solo piano repertoire that has fresh modern slants without too much of progressive sound and style.

The next work that followed was *Winter for Piano* written in March of the same year. This work is available only in manuscript, available in the Special Collection Library at University of California, Santa Barbara. On the left hand corner of the manuscript, the composer had written in *The Seasons, IV. Winter*, suggesting that there were to be three other movements in the suite to complete the seasons. When asked in an

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61 Outland, 63.
62 Diemer, *Suite No.1 For Children* (Germany: Certosa Verlag, 2012), forward.
63 Ibid.
e-mail interview about the existence of other movements I, II, and III of the suite, the composer responded that she never went on with the series.\textsuperscript{64} 

The composer shows further neo-classic inclination in this work as well, through not only the obvious tribute to the existing “Seasons” by Vivaldi, but also in specific motivic gestures in the movement, that recall the Baroque style of writing. For example, the opening section starts with fast sixteenth-note oscillations, which carry the melody line over a pedal tone E, set above lower register eighth note accompaniment. Such arrangement is a common Baroque style of writing for keyboards, evoking compound melody writing of string instrument in the right hand and a basso continuo in the left hand (Example 4). Also, the composer wrote “semi-detached” in the score, instructing the performers to play in the Baroque style.

Example 4. \textit{Winter}, mm. 1-2\textsuperscript{65}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example4.png}
\end{center}

The work is in da capo ternary form with an extended coda section, which is common in Baroque music, although a bit out of the ordinary from the usual binary form found in Baroque keyboard suites. Also, meter changes take place frequently, moving from 4/4 to 6/4 to 3/4 to 5/4, back to 4/4 in the opening section alone, showing modern concept of phrasing, along with the unconventional harmonies within the overall tonal sonority.

\textsuperscript{64} Diemer, e-mail message to the author, March 25, 2011.
\textsuperscript{65} Diemer, “Winter,” score, 1952, Davidson Library Department of Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara; used with permission from the composer.
Although *Winter* is not a major composition by the composer, it is yet another work that gives further insight on the composer’s application of the neo-classic style in the latter part of her early musical phase. Compared to the preceding work *Suite No.1 for Children*, she had expanded the formal scheme in this work, while keeping the tightness and coherence of the structure. Also, even though the work is indicated as intermediate level by the composer, it requires more agility and care in execution than the previous work, due to the extensive use of accidentals and fast moving notes and counterpoints. Were the entire suite composed along with the existing movement *Winter*, the work could have been even greater of an addition to the solo piano repertoire of late intermediate level.

The second suite for children is the last of the intermediate level series of 1952, written in July of the year. In this work, Diemer combines the programmatic tendency of her earlier compositional period with more neo-tonal sounds. There are four movements with very picturesque titles: *The Sad-Eyed Buffalo, March of the Bear Cubs, The Old Camel,* and *Monkey Dance*. As the titles reveal, the suite is unified with the animal theme, where each movement portrays different animal’s characteristic. In every movement, a clear main motive with specific imagery pervades, and the unifying motive brings coherence to the form within the individual movements. As in the first suite for children, there are clear tonal centers in the music without the use of the key signatures and traditional harmonic progressions. Along with the first suite for children, the *Suite No.2 for Children*, is a very effective intermediate level work, which combines the new and the old sounds and styles in attractive and accessible ways to both younger and older pianists.

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66 Outland, 63.
alike. Although the second suite collectively carries a general program of animals, the movements can be performed separately or in different combinations, as there is no unifying musical motive, much like the first suite for children.

After the intermediate level solo piano works in neo-classic style, Diemer returned to writing more difficult works, producing the second piano sonata in 1955, which was after her study at the Berkshire Music Festival in Tanglewood and before she began her doctoral study at Eastman School of Music. At the Berkshire Festival, she had encountered Roger Session and appreciated his approaches in structure and form in composition, particularly in his “development of ideas” and “the logical unfolding of material”, where motives or themes work organically at both small and large scales within a composition. Such preoccupation with structure resonates much in the second sonata, as Diemer explicitly indicates the importance of macro and micro constructions within the composition in the notes to the Second Sonata for Piano.

“Macro” structure is the overall form, the first movement being in sonata form, the second movement (after the introduction) being in variation form. “Micro” structure has to do with the motives from the themes. These motives keep recurring in various guises and are used for development. In this way, the music is supposed to unfold logically and in a unified manner.

This sonata uses traditional forms in its two movements, as the first movement is in a clear arched sonata form, where the second theme comes back before the first in the recapitulation, and the second movement is in a variation form.

The Sonata also shows most explicit influence of Hindemith style, despite the composer’s open resistance to the “consensus…that everyone at Yale was writing like

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68 Lin, 25.
Hindemith.\textsuperscript{69} The opening of the Sonata bears strong resemblance to Hindemith’s second sonata, as it features the same texture of a melody accompanied by an \textit{alberti bass} in the accompaniment, and the contours of the melodies are akin to each other (Examples 5 & 6). Even the tempo marking and description at the opening of the Sonata is the same as that of Hindemith’s, as it is ascribed at the beginning, “Moderately fast,” which is a direct translation of Hindemith’s marking for his second sonata, “\textit{Mäßig schnell}.” Despite the difference in the meter—Emma Lou’s sonata in 4/4 and Hindemith’s in 3/4—the resemblance is too strong to be unrecognized.

Example 5. Diemer’s \textit{Piano Sonata No.2}, mm. 1-4\textsuperscript{70}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example5.png}
\caption{Example 5. Diemer’s \textit{Piano Sonata No.2}, mm. 1-4\textsuperscript{70}}
\end{figure}

Example 6. Hindemith’s \textit{Piano Sonata No.2}, mm. 1-6\textsuperscript{71}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example6.png}
\caption{Example 6. Hindemith’s \textit{Piano Sonata No.2}, mm. 1-6\textsuperscript{71}}
\end{figure}

The work had won the Missouri Federation of Music Clubs Award in 1955,\textsuperscript{72} but ironically, the composer had commented that the sonata was the least inspiring sonata of

\textsuperscript{69} Schlegel, 8.
\textsuperscript{70} Emma Lou Diemer, “Piano Sonata No.2,” score, Davidson Library Department of Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara; used with permission from the composer.
\textsuperscript{71} Paul Hindemith, \textit{Piano Sonata No.2}, 1936.
Of the three sonatas, the second Sonata appears to be the most dissonant but controlled in structure, and less intuitively written, unlike most of the composer’s works.


a) Post Arlington Years (1961-1971):

*Time Pictures* was written in 1961 and published first in 1962 by Boosey & Hawkes, who also reprinted it in 1983. Originally titled *Four Piano Teaching Pieces,* each of the four movements is dedicated to her sister Dorothy’s children, Terry, Alan, Bonny, and Betty. When reprinted by Boosey & Hawkes in 1983, the work bore the title *Time Pictures: Four Studies in Time.* It is Emma Lou’s first work that had gotten published in its entirety and possibly the first work to be written about on compositional and pedagogical issues. In 1963 issue of *The Piano Quarterly 43,* Hubert Doris’ review of the work reads, “The level that these pieces represent is that which we should be able to expect from all composers who dare to write for the most impressionable musical minds.” The work drew further attention in a later number of *The Piano Quarterly* in 1973, as the review title that tells it all, “A Brief Survey of Some Piano Music in the Boosey and Hawkes Catalog Which Shouldn’t Be Neglected, But Is.”

The work is also the first easy level composition by the composer, and as the

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72 Schlegel, 105.
73 Lin, 32.
74 Schlegel, 106.
original title of the work reveals, the intention of pedagogical purpose is explicit. It can be said that the focus on pedagogical resources for piano began with this work, as a byproduct of the Arlington years, which had affirmed the composer’s focus on writing music for all levels.

From 1965 to 1970, Diemer taught various subjects in theory and composition at the University of Maryland, and with more advanced musicians around, Diemer resumed writing advanced level works.\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Seven Etudes} is the first solo piano work that shows the return to writing harder works, since the second sonata. Written for Stewart Gordon who was then the chairman of the piano department at the University, and premiered by the dedicatee in 1966 at the University of Maryland, the work was sought after by pianists for numbers of performances, for years to come, including ones by the composer herself, as late as 1992.\textsuperscript{78} Hailed as “one of the most ambitious and scholarly music projects yet attempted here,”\textsuperscript{79} it is also the first work to be written much about, with at least four articles and reviews, including a dissertation, which discusses the work in depth.\textsuperscript{80}

It is interesting to note that \textit{Seven Etudes} is the first advanced level solo piano work with such public appeal. Before the composer’s participation in YCP at Arlington, none of the composer’s advanced level solo piano works have received recognition outside of academia. In this work, Diemer successfully applies the skill of writing accessible and effective music that she had acquired from the YCP to her inherent musical voice and musical knowledge begotten from the academic trainings; despite the

\textsuperscript{77} Outland, 13.
\textsuperscript{78} Schlegel, 106.
sophisticated musical contents of modern sounds and techniques, the lucidity in the varying characters and sonorities of the etudes engage the ears readily and steadily throughout the work. Also, the diverse moods and affects in the work are well-paced and dramatized throughout the set as a whole, where there is balancing of activity and inactivity, excitement and calmness, and intensity and relaxation from one etude to another, until the flamboyant finish in the last etude. Such features in *Seven Etudes* reach out more readily to broader public and with greater general appeal to the modern sounds, when compared to some of Diemer’s earlier advanced level solo piano works.

Written in the same year as *Seven Etudes for Piano*, *Four on a Row* is another composition where modern compositional concept is made more accessible. In 1966, Merle Montgomery, an editor and educational consultant at the Oxford University Press, made a request to Diemer to write some easy twelve-tone works for the New Scribner Music Library, as the twelve-tone method was still considered mainstream at the time. The resulting work was an intermediate level work, *Four on a Row*, which consists of four short movements written in twelve-tone method. The composer states that the work is “more for exploring contemporary styles… not as much as graded pieces,” diminishing the focus of piano pedagogy—despite its deliberate ease in playing—but weighing more on the study of new sound and style. The twelve-tone method is inconsistent with Diemer’s general philosophy and techniques in composition, but the *Four on a Row* serves as the composer’s two-cents in the mainstream compositional technique of the time, and much of Diemer’s sound and style is infused into the work,

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81 Outland, 150.
82 Quoted in Johns, 68.
along with the twelve-tone method.

For example, the row that Diemer had used has a property that has less stringent character than most twelve-tone music expresses. In an interview about the work, Dr. Diemer revealed that she was “trying to color the whole little set with consonant intervals,” which she had achieved by creating a row using mostly fifth and fourth intervals. The row’s basic forms are presented at the beginning of the work and shown below. The discrete tetrachords, which is the main grouping seen in the work, reveal that the first two sets are of the same prime form (0257), and the third set (0127) also contains similar intervallic properties (Example 7).

Example 7. *Four on a Row*, the row

As the adjacent intervallic relationships of the row reveal, there are five perfect fifth intervals, three perfect fourths, one augmented second, and two minor second intervals, creating much open sonority in the row. Accordingly, although the pieces in *Four on a Row* are written completely atonally with serial method, open sounds of quartal and quintal harmonies prevail. In other words, despite the purposeful negation of any tonal center by using the twelve-tone method, resulting sound is a paradoxical overshadowing

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83 Quoted in Johns, 72.
84 Diemer, *Four on a Row* (Germany: Certosa Verlag, 2012); Examples 7 & 8 come from the same source and are used with permission from Certosa Verlag.
of fourths and fifths, creating aurally adhering points in the music (Example 8).

Example 8. *Four on a Row*, Movement I mm. 1-2 & last six measures

Other traits home to Diemer’s style, such as motivic writing, strong rhythmic profile, much use of ostinato, metric displacement, and extreme dynamic contrasts speak louder in the work, than the particular compositional method used. Thus, although an unusual approach for the composer, the composition does not stand out as an aberration in her oeuvre and is well-worth learning for intermediate and advanced level pianists. The work was published in 1972 and after having gone out-of-print for a while, was republished in 2012 by Certosa Verlag.

*Sound Pictures* was written in 1971, the year that Diemer took teaching position
at University of California, Santa Barbara. It is the first work for solo piano that contains a variety of twentieth century idioms for teaching purpose, and thus, *Sound Pictures* straddle the features of both Post-Arlington and Experimental periods of the composer’s middle years. However, the deliberate ease of the set and clarity of the pedagogical purpose weigh more than the degree of exploration of the modern sound in the work, making it more suitable to be in the Post-Arlington category. Various twentieth century idioms, such as tone clusters, chord planing, and frequent meter changes are presented in bite sizes, and the brevity of the pieces seems to aim at assisting the students in learning the work with more ease. Following *Time Pictures*, the composer’s growing effort in the repertoire for piano pedagogy shows more extensively in this work.

b) Exploration Years (1971-1991):

In 1979, *Toccata* was written for a piano major student Nozomi Takahashi at University of California, Santa Barbara and was premiered by the dedicatee in the same year at Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall in the University. The work was published in 1980 by Sisra Publications and again in 2002 by Empire Publishing Service. It is also included in *Music without Borders*, a collection of 20th-century piano music by six Ukrainian and six American composers, edited by Ivan F. Karabyts, which is published through Duma Music in 1996.\(^8^5\)

In the composer’s note, Diemer indicates that Nozomi “had quite good technique, but small hands,” and because of that, she tailored the work to fit her hands, avoiding

\(^8^5\) Schlegel, 107.
demanding reaches. The work enjoyed considerable popularity, as numerous performances followed after the premier, including ones by the composer herself. One performer, Nanette Kaplan Solomon had performed the piece 18 times over two years between 1995-1997. Much has also been written about the piece, many of which are high praises about the work’s attractiveness both to the performers and listeners, as well as its effectiveness as a composition for performance. For instance, Bradford Gowen praised the work in a review of the piece, stating, “This is a highly engaging piece which should be a lot of fun to work on,… Cheers for the composer; she has given us a useful and satisfying piece.” George Anson’s review reaffirms the praise as it describes the piece, “An off-beat piece which should interest and excite the listener.”

Diemer further reveals her compositional intention in the note that she had combined styles of early keyboard music with that of 20th century. In the note, she also credited Scarlatti for some inspiration, especially in the strong character of melody and the use of wide leaps. Over the classic form of ternary structure, many twentieth-century techniques abound, such as using the bar lines to divide phrases or sections rather than meter, on-string playing, use of clusters, jazzy rhythm of syncopations, and extensive use of ostinatos. As the note indicates, the work exemplifies the composer’s attempt and appeal in eclecticism for her music, as she mixes various elements from music of old and current. *Toccata* is the first of others to follow later, which exhibits extensive combinational approach that characterizes Diemer’s mature styles. Not surprisingly, in an e-mail interview with me, Diemer named this work as one of her representative

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Following *Toccata*, *Encore* was written two years later. The work was written for Betty Oberacker, a professor of music at the University of California, Santa Barbara. It was premiered by her in 1982, at University of Southern California. *Encore* is similar to *Toccata* in many compositional features, such as usage of short motives with much repetition, dampening of the strings, and motto perpetuo flow. However, *Encore* is more virtuosic and challenging technically than *Toccata*, where the note reading alone requires extra effort, as the pages are saturated with accidentals, and there is no substantial break in sound throughout the entire seven minutes. Also, there is a quasi-aleatoric technique included in this work, an added 20th-century compositional concept, which is quite challenging to execute effectively: several passages are instructed to play out of synchronization between the two hands, allowing variations of executions with different chances (Example 9).

Example 9. *Encore*, (fourth system on p. 7)\(^{90}\)

With the constant motion of the relentless motives, the musical effect is that of an extreme concentration and intensity, differing from *Toccata*, which offers contrasting

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\(^{89}\) Diemer, e-mail message to the author, March 25, 2011.

\(^{90}\) Diemer, *Encore* (Studio City, CA: Empire Publishing Service, 1982); used with permission from Empire Publishing Service.
points of relaxation in sound. Also, *Encore* does not employ as much variety in the use of experimental sound as in *Toccata*, only consisting passages of playing over the dampened strings. Overall, although similar in overall musical effect, *Encore* contains more focused stimulation of one affect, while *Toccata* offers wider palates of colors in sound with less amount of work to learn the piece. Consequently, *Toccata* remains as the piece more sought after to perform than *Encore*.

*Seven Pieces for Marilyn* (alternative title, *A Little of This and That*) was written in the following year, 1982, for a pianist and friend of the composer, Marylyn MacKenzie Skiöld. The work was not published until recently, in 2010 by Certosa Verlag, a German publisher of women composer. During the publication, the original title was replaced with the new title *Seven Pieces für Klavier*. Consequently, the work did not receive much recognition in the States until after several years. According to Schlegel, only one performance record exists in the States, of the movements *IV. A Little Ragtime* and *V. A Little Imagination*, in 1999, which is seventeen years after the composition. The performance (not recorded as the premiere,) took place at Lawrence University for Festival of Contemporary Piano Music at Wisconsin, by pianist Joslyn Posselt. The work is now on an Albany Records CD, with the composer herself performing the work.91

This work is considered to be the first “compendium of all elements of her style, past and present, from fugue to the on-the-string sounds.”92 In the composer’s notes, Diemer reveals explicitly that the work is for intermediate pianists. She gives specific instructions, as she further writes:

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91 Diemer, e-mail message to the author, May 20, 2011
92 Outland, 14.
After mastering the notes, rhythms and other elements written in the score, the player should exercise freedom in the playing of the music, using rubato where appropriate and being particularly creative in *A Little Imagination*.

Also, to assist an effective execution of the on-the-string playing, which may be unfamiliar especially to intermediate pianists, Diemer gives some practical suggestions for the on-string playing portion. The guidelines include adding visible markings with the string names on the matching dampers, removing the rack, memorizing the music, or having an assistant for the string-dampening, especially in *A Little Drumming*.

Although the seven pieces all bear the titles described as “little,” they carry sufficient challenges and musical contents that require much attention to the details of the instructions, especially in the movements with more adventurous sounds, such as *A Little Drumming* and *A Little Imagination*. There are frequent meter changes, asymmetric phrasings, and varying genres that span from fugue to rag, displaying musical concepts and styles from the old to the current. As such, the work does not need to be performed in its entirety, but individual movements can be played separately, in combination with selected few, or even out of order.\(^93\) The set is a good twentieth-century repertoire for intermediate pianists and up.

Written in the same year is *Little Toccata for Piano*, which is also the only unpublished work from the composer’s middle period. This work is available only in the special archive at UCSB. The work is of intermediate difficulty written in neo-tonal harmonic language, with G as the center note. The beginning is marked as *Brisk*, *rhythmic*, with a zesty metronome marking of a quarter-note equals 144. Throughout the

\(^{93}\) Schlegel, 111.
frequent changing meters in the piece, the ubiquitous eighth notes are the smallest
rhythmic division, driving the piece at a considerable speed, with the instructed
metronomic marking. The correct execution of the fast changing articulation and varying
groupings of the eighth notes are the most challenging aspects of the piece, and students
need to establish good sense of eighth note pulsation, before attempting to play the piece
at the fast speed. The work displays much of the composer’s favorite compositional
features, such as repetitive motives, percussive use of the piano, and jazzy articulation in
a concise three-part form, which flashes by in less than 2 minutes at the marked tempo. 
*Little Toccata for Piano* is an exciting and effective performance piece for intermediate
level pianists.

Representing the electronic music occupation of the composer in the 80s are two
works not listed in the chart of compilation in the beginning of this section, *Funfest for Piano and Tape* (1984) and *Rite of Summer* (1986). Although these works feature piano
as a key role, they are not strictly solo pieces, as they involve other ensembles of
electronic media. Both works are written for piano and tape and about 12 minutes long in
duration.

They also use an aleatoric method extensively. *Funfest* demonstrates how Diemer
incorporates the technique with one of her main compositional techniques of
improvisation. The work consists of six continuous and contrasting sections where the
piano improvises within specific guidelines, along the prerecorded tape. The recording of
the tape also involved improvisation method within the general moods and sounds that
the composer envisioned for the work. There are motives, figurations, rhythms, and
effects that are set for the pianist to use in the improvisation, in conversational interaction
with the tape. The composer summarizes in the performance note, “The pianist is to match this improvisational style insofar as possible, being sensitive to changes that occur, imitating the tape, conversing with it, providing some new ideas if appropriate: the pianist presenting a dynamic, visual image of the ideas and sounds being created.”94 Thus, the performance of the work will produce different renditions depending on the improvisational skills and decision of the pianist within the area of the composer’s suggestions. Unlike many compositions written in aleatoric method which may appear as dauntingly avant-garde, Funfest’s structure and guidelines are manageable, and the inclusion of gamelan sounds, jazz rhythms, and tonal sonorities with playful gestures are inviting features to the composition.

The next solo piano work is another extensive set, Adventures in Sound, written in 1987 and published in 1989 by Summy Birchard Music. Since 1994, Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., publishes the work. The work is similar to Seven Pieces for Marilyn in that it provides a variety of contemporary music styles, from impressionistic sounds, jazz, and experimental methods in fifteen individual pieces. An important difference is in the fact that this is a first progressive study work, graded low to moderate difficulty over fifteen pieces that address different twentieth century idioms. The titles of each piece are also much more descriptive and programmatic than in Seven Pieces for Marilyn, reminiscent of her intermediate level works from the early period. The work thus serves purposes in pedagogy as well as performance.

Space Suite: 12 Short Pieces was the first commissioned solo piano work for the

94 Diemer, “Funfest,” score, 1984, Davidson Library Department of Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara, composer’s notes.
composer; Clavier Magazine had asked Diermer to write a work for its July/August 1989 issue, and four movements from Space Suite (Billions of Stars, Out in Space, The Rings of Saturn, and The Surface of the Moon) were published in the issue. The work was completed in 1988, published in 1989 by Colla Voce, and republished in 2002 by Plymouth Music. The full title of the work is Space Suite: Twelve Short Pieces for Solo Piano (Using Idioms and Techniques of the 20th Century).

The inspiration for the work came from a television show on an astronaut event of space study in the States, from where the composer had gotten the ideas for the titles, and later composed pieces that expressed the titles. The suite is another progressive study, similar to Adventures in Sound, as it is graded low to high difficulty over 12 pieces, where each piece’s significant feature is mentioned in the notes before the table of contents. Also like Adventures in Sound, Space Suite consists of individual movements with programmatic titles. Unlike Adventures in Sound, however, there is a thematic unity throughout the whole work, where each movement depicts subjects and moods related to galaxy and space matters. There are several recorded performances according to Schlegel, but each of them is only of selected movements. The work is an imaginative contribution to 20th-century piano pedagogy literature.


a) Eclectic Years (1991-2000):

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The first piece written in this period is *Three Pieces for Piano*, written in 1991 and published in 1992 and 2002 by Plymouth Music. Written for intermediate pianists, *Three Pieces for Piano* was commissioned by Music Teachers Association of California for the MTAC’s “Friends of Today’s Music” project. Each piece was premiered the same year of publication in 1992, at Long Beach, California, by three different piano students, Ady Schwartz, Yuko Hayashi, and Catherine Shiang. The work received good reviews in such periodicals as *Piano and keyboard* and *The American Music Teacher*, from both performance and pedagogical perspectives. Pianist and professor of piano at University of Maryland School of Music, Bradford Gowen has described *Three Pieces for Piano* as follows: “They evolve dramatically, provide brilliance and richness of sonority without great difficulties, are comfortably pianistic, and can be managed by players with a normal to small hand size.” Helen Marlais, afore-mentioned pedagogue, also praised the work, describing it as an “intoxicating work written with contemporary idioms”.

Although the subtitle on the cover page reads “For the intermediate pianist,” the pieces are much more elaborate and substantial than the previous intermediate level works. The motives and materials are much more developed and dramatized, and many compositional methods and styles of old and new, such as neo-classic forms, neo-romantic sounds, motivic unity throughout the work, and experimental techniques, are fused together. The first piece is a theme and variations, the second piece a slow dance,

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and the third piece a fast dance, all of which work together well as a good performance set.

Written in 1993, the composer named *Fantasy* as one of her representative works. The work was published in the following year, 1994 and again in 2002 by Plymouth Music. It was commissioned by Karen Knecht (formerly Scoville), a pianist and a faculty member at Chapman University in Orange, California. She had premiered the work in the same year, at Merkin Hall in New York. The pianist had requested a substantial work in romantic character to be included in her recital program, to which Diemer responded with multi-sectional one movement work, instructed to be “played with much freedom and dramatic contrast. The metronome markings are approximations, and the pianist need not follow them literally.”

*Fantasy* is one of the most advanced level works that the composer wrote for solo piano, where many compositional concepts and styles are fused together, from neo-romantic style to tone rows and rhythmic serialism, and several other twentieth century idioms. The sonority is the most dissonant sounding out of the last period, almost reminiscent of the composer’s early period compositions, and although much of it reflects fantasy-like, improvisatory passages, systematic method of serial contents alludes deliberate laboring in the compositional process.

*Hannukah Song* is a simple intermediate level performance piece written in 1999. The work is missing from the UCSB special archive and now available only through the composer. It is a simple arrangement of an Israeli folk tune in ABA form, lasting under

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99 Diemer, e-mail message to the author, March 25th, 2011.
100 Diemer, *Fantasy for Piano* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Plymouth Music Co. Inc., 1994), 2.
2 minutes, set at a vivacious tempo. The work is clearly tonal, with the melody in D minor throughout, but the use of octatonic scale is prominent in the middle section, separated as a polytonal scheme of Db-Major in the right hand superimposed over the D-Minor left hand melody (Example 10).

Example 10. Hannukah Song, mm. 33-35

Other trade marks of Diemer’s composition, such as syncopation, percussive articulation, and constantly energetic drive abound throughout. The work is a fun, useful performance piece for intermediate level pianists during the Jewish holiday. It is the first in the series of sets of arrangements on existing tunes that the composer produced (Spirituals 2002 & Holidays for Piano 2003), and these works reflect the composer’s Gebrauchmusik philosophy most literally in their clear and specific usability.

Sonata No.3 was written over the span of four years, from 1996 to 2000. Written for Carol Dvoran-Lancaster, a pianist and pedagogue in Los Angeles, this work is a three-movement work, where the movements bear individual titles and were all written and published in different years. The first movement, Serenade/Toccata, was finished in late 1996, the last movement, Tango Fantastique, in the spring of 1999, and the second movement, Interlude, in the spring of 2000. Hildegard Publishing Company, which

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101 Diemer, “Hannukah Song,” score, 1999, Davidson Library Department of Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara; used with permission from the composer.
specializes in publication of women composers past and current, published 
*Serenade/Toccata and Tango Fantastique* in 1999, *Interlude* in 2000, and all three movements as a sonata in 2001. The premiere of *Serenade/Toccata* took place in January 1999 by a pianist named Kathleen Murray at the Festival of Contemporary Piano Music at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, and in the same year, its recording was made separately by Joan DeVee Dixon Broyles on RBW Recording. She also premiered the complete sonata at the Festival of Women Composers International at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in March, 2001. Last of the composer’s piano sonatas, *Piano Sonata No. 3* serves as a compendium work of the composer’s collective style, philosophy, and sound in an effective presentation.

b) Recent Years (2001- to the present):

Two works of tonal arrangements of well-known songs mark the beginning of this phase, where much of the music is readily accessible both technically and musically. *Spirituals for Piano* from 2002 is a collection of arrangements on 15 African-American spirituals and a tune from the Appalachian Mountains. In the published score, all the songs and their lyrics in their original forms are included at the back of the arrangements. The technical difficulty is at the intermediate level, but some pieces, such as *Guide My Feet, Hes’s Got the Whole World in His Hand*, and *Go, Tell It On The Mountain*, do require more virtuosic technique such as wide arpeggiation in the left hand, octave leaps, and heavy chordal passages. All the arrangements are tonal, but there are occasional extraordinary harmonies and chromaticism thrown in intermittently, along with

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impressionistic technique, such as planing chords. An example can be seen in *Go, Tell It on the Mountain*, where the melody begins after the introduction (Example 11).

Example 11. *Spirituals, Go Tell It On the Mountain*, mm.10-13

This work is a good resource for pianists who are church musicians. Each of the arrangements bears various topics of Christian faith and carries a broad range of moods, including contemplativeness, piety, and auspice, appropriate for a variety of places in the service, such as prelude, offertory, or postlude. The work was published in 2002 by Santa Barbara Music Publishing Company.

Next composition, *Holidays of the Year for Piano*, written and published in 2003 by Hal Leonard, is another collection of arrangements on existing melodies, similar to *Spirituals* mentioned above, but broader in its function. There are fifteen arrangements of songs and tunes that are associated with holidays throughout the year, both secular and sacred. The arrangements appear in the order of the holidays, from January to December. This is another very useful set for church musicians and gig musicians, as the collection contains attractive solo performance pieces of all the important sacred holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, and well-known secular special days, such as Fourth of July and Thanksgiving.

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103 Diemer, *Spirituals*; used with permission from the composer.
The work is dedicated to the composer’s sister and her husband, Dorothy Diemer Hendry and Wickcliffe Byron Hendry. As it was in *Spirituals*, most of the arrangements are of intermediate level difficulty, with “a few that will require a little more work.” All the pieces are written overall in tonal language with some inclusion of free tonality.

Continuing with the output with sacred and practical purposes, Diemer composed the most massive work in her entire contribution to solo piano literature, which is *Psalms for Piano*. Written in 2003 and edited in 2005, *Psalms for Piano* is an all-embracing work that summarizes all of the composer’s compositional traits and serves dual purposes as sacred and concert music. The work consists of eighteen movements, which cover a wide spectrum of sounds and expressions. To play the entire set, it certainly demands considerable strength and agility in technique, a solid rhythmic sense, and musical maturity, but several selective movements are very accessible for intermediate pianists.

The work was commissioned by Joan DeVee Dixon, Professor of Music at Frostburg State University in Maryland, but it has not had a premier yet. Dixon had attempted recording the work several times, but did not have the time to polish the project. Consequently, the work still remains unheard by the public. The eighteen movements are each based on different psalm verses. For each movement, Dixon had provided the exact Psalm reference and contemporary titles and translations, which are her own paraphrases. Each movement is a miniature tone poem, reflecting the Psalm verse, which is reprinted below the title of the movement. Unlike the previous two compositions with sacred context, which were arrangements on existing songs, this work

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105 Joan DeVee Dixon, e-mail correspondence with the author, October 9th, 2011.
is almost entirely original, inspired by specific Psalm verses in the Bible; the only exception is the last movement, XVIII, which quotes a hymn tune, *Lobe den Herren* (Praise to the Lord), along with several other motives from the previous movements of the work. Diemer has listed *Psalms for Piano* as one of her representative and/or favorite solo piano works. It is the most recent and only work of the composer from the twenty-first century that carries more substance and significance for performance at more advanced level.

Diemer’s most expansive pedagogical work is *Reaching Out*, written and published in 2004 by FJH. The work was written as a part of *The FJH Contemporary Keyboard Editions*, at the request of Helen Marlais, a pedagogue and author of several music education books, including various piano series. Helen Marlais is also the Director of Keyboard Publications for The FJH Music Company, and *Reaching Out* was the first of several works that would be published by the FJH. A collection of eighteen small pieces that addresses a wide variety of musical subjects such as “moods,… tempos, meters, registers, articulations, and dynamics,” *Reaching Out* bears similar pedagogical purposes as previous teaching compilations, such as *Adventures in Sound* and *Space Suite*, as the pieces are arranged in the order of difficulty with regards to musical and technical matters.

From 2007 to the present, the composer’s output for the solo piano consists of mostly easy pedagogic works. All of the little studies are written for Helen Marlais’ *Contemporary Collage-Music of the 21st Century* series, and as the title reveals,

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106 Diemer, e-mail message to the author, March 25, 2011.
the simple pieces are written in various modern musical idioms. Overall, same concepts and techniques used in previous teaching materials reappear but with further simplification, geared towards beginners or young students. Among other modern idioms, minimalistic writing, quintal/quartal harmonies, and asymmetric rhythms are most prominent in these latest teaching pieces. These pedagogical pieces (Angry March, Happy Thoughts, Minimalisting, Thinking Back, Bells on a Starry Night, Sailing on a Quiet Sea, and We Won the Race) will be discussed in the Chapter III, as parts of discussion on the composer’s contribution to piano pedagogy literature.

A Waltz for Isolde from 2010 is the only intermediate level piece written since 2007. The piece was written for Isolde Weiermüller-Backes, the owner of the German publishing company of women composers, Certosa Verlag, which had published the work in the same year of the composition. A charming piece suitable for performance by intermediate and above level pianists, the piece will be discussed more in detail in Chapter III.

B. Summary of compositional features

As discussed so far, until 1955, the composer was under diverse academic environments, and along with the influences of teachers in her paths, the influences from the composer’s studies of piano compositions by various composers at the time surface noticeably; Outland states, “The Piano remained her main performance medium during this time, as she studied and played recitals. Her compositional efforts centered on

108 Technically, Emma Lou had graduated from Yale in the year of 1950, starting her professional activities out of the school. However, she had engaged herself in further academic trainings through opportunities such as the study in Belgium, granted by the Fulbright Scholarship from 1952 to 1953 and Tanglewood festival in the summers of 1954 and 1955.
it also, all of her earliest works involving the piano.”\textsuperscript{109} For example, neo-romantic gestures and temperaments emerge in her music, as seen in her first piano sonata, which was influenced by such composers as Brahms and Rachmaninoff, whom the composer studied and admired. Another can be seen in the composer’s harmonic preference in impressionistic and neo-tonal sounds, as in \textit{Preludes for Piano}, recalling compositions of Debussy and Ravel. Along with the elements of the past music, the composer also kept up with the compositional trend of the time in the academia, not forsaking the explorations in atonality and heavy chromaticism which are shown in works like \textit{Chromatic Fantasy} and \textit{Sonata No.2}. Many of twentieth-century techniques accompanied the mixture of styles and sounds mentioned above, most noticeably, the perception of the piano as a percussion instrument; some works from this period (such as the \textit{Toccata} from the second suite or the \textit{Monkey Dance} from the second suite for children) and increasingly in later works contain rhythmically driven and vital passages, where variety of percussive articulations and jagged motions stand out more impressionably than the lyrical use of the instrument.

In summary, the early period functioned as a phase with melting pot of various concepts and sounds of previous and present eras of music, from which the composer progressively found her preference and affinity and through which she expressed her inherent compositional voice with increasing coherence and authority. More specifically, out of the wide span of external influences and styles of various eras, Diemer gradually showed her preference in neo-romantic styles, neo-classic structures, and neo-tonal sounds towards the end of the period. The composer’s philosophy in music-making also

\textsuperscript{109} Outland, 62.
demonstrated the principle of *Gebrauchmusik* towards the end of this period, and the two tendencies seem to support each other in Diemer’s music. Out of the early period, Diemer stirred away from atonal, abstract, and austere music, writing increasingly in harmonically accessible, structurally classical, and stylistically relatable music. The second piano sonata may be a step backward from this direction, as it sounds more dissonant and chromatic than the compositions from 1952, but the tendencies strengthen in the following years of Arlington, under the Young Composer’s Project experience, as will be seen in the next chapter.

Collectively, the middle period coincides with the most active and diverse phase of the composer’s professional life, and consequently, the music from this period has a great variety of 20th-century styles. In the 60s, the influence of YCP years carried over in works of all levels and styles, where *Gebrauchmusik* principle seeps through both pedagogical and performance works, through neo-classic, neo-romantic, and even serial compositions. Features of the work written since 1971 include electronic music influence, percussive keyboard idioms, extended techniques, and sound exploration, all of which correspond to the composer’s musical environment and involvement at the time, working in University of California, Santa Barbara. Such traits appear to a milder degree in *Sound Pictures* as mentioned above, and much more clearly in works written after *Sound Pictures*, starting with *Toccata*.

Furthermore, in the middle period, such diversity is not reserved for advanced level compositions but present in works at all levels, including beginners. In fact, in the middle period, the focus has shifted to the less advanced musicians, in that there are only three advanced level compositions out of the ten total from this period, whereas in the
early period, there were six advanced level works out of the nine total, and no easy level compositions. The composer not only expanded in the variety of styles and sounds of twentieth century but also in reaching broader participants in music, producing works that would be played by the wider spectrum of people. The publications of the works from the middle period partially attest to the success of the composer’s above intention, as all of the compositions from this period are published, except for the *Little Toccata for Piano* (1982).

The composer’s focus on writing for the wider spectrum of levels and purposes continues and amplifies into the last period; there are similar numbers of outputs for all different levels, and several compositions are with versatile purposes including pedagogy, performance, and sacred or holiday functions. Substantial concert works at advanced level, such as *Piano Sonata No. 3* and *Fantasy*, which the composer picked as some of her representative works come from this period, and pedagogical works at intermediate level, such as *Three Pieces for Piano* and *Reaching Out*, are noteworthy contributions to modern piano pedagogy literature. Arrangements of familiar spirituals and holiday tunes, such as *Spirituals for Piano* and *Holidays of the Year for Piano* do not avert greatly from tonal writing and are useful in religious services or as performance pieces in various special days for pianists at levels intermediate and beyond. Several compositions from this period contain longer and more movements with versatile performance options: *Spirituals for Piano* and *Holidays of the Year for Piano* are compilation types of works; *Reaching Out* is a graded series work; and *Psalms for Piano* is an extensive suite with a tight thematic unity. In *Psalms for Piano*, the composer presents sacred music not merely
as service music but also as concert music. Lastly, there are several easy level pedagogical pieces from the most recent years. Accordingly, as the inventory of this period’s works testifies, the emphasized elements of the compositions from the last period are accessibility, which invites broader levels of pianists, and functionality, which offers diverse purposes of the music.

Along with the Gebrauchmusik principles underlying the philosophic essences of Diemer’s last period’s works, eclecticism of styles and sounds is also prominent. From the early period, the composer’s preferences of impressionistic sounds and consonant sonority, of neo-classic genres or simple and clear forms, and of neo-romantic sentiment with programmatic contents and dramatic build-up, reappear in varying forms. Features from the YCP years, during which the composer “avoided atonality, excessive use of accidentals and changes of meter, prolonged dissonance, complicated rhythms, extreme ranges,” but included instead “considerable use of modal, diatonic writing, chords built on thirds, fourths and fifth, ostinato rhythms, syncopations,” and the characteristics of later middle period, such as quasi-electronic sounds and use of extended techniques, are used in many of the late compositions in varying combinations. To the previously begotten and developed qualities, mixed styles and concepts of the 20th century, ranging from serialism, minimalism, new age music, jazz, folk, and experimentalism, are blended together. Thus, the works from the last period collectively presents Diemer’s favorite compositional methods and elements from her previous years of experience and training in eclectic summary, along with the Gebrauchmusik principles of accessibility and

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110 Diemer, e-mail correspondence to the author, March 25th, 2011.
111 Schlegel, 13.
functionality.

Aside from these characteristics, the compositions from the last period contain much more motivic connection within improvisational writing, which is the composer’s main compositional approach. In the previous period’s compositions, programmatic or thematic subjects held various individual pieces together in a set, but there was no direct musical link between the pieces or movements in a work. *(Suite No.1: Landscapes, Suite No.2 for Children “At the Zoo” and Sound Pictures are some examples.)* In the works of the last period, such as *Three Pieces for Piano, Piano Sonata No.3*, and *Psalms for Piano*, there is much circular writing within a work, where motivic ideas are shared or recalled across the movements. Furthermore, such coherent writing does not appear to be labored or extensively premeditated but seems to flow through the composer’s innate composing method of improvisation, where the structures and ideas seem to develop naturally from one to another. The extemporaneous approach in composition had been Diemer’s main emphasis in all of her compositions, but it is in the last period that it is coupled with more cohesive writing on bigger scale works.

Collectively, Diemer’s compositional features can be broadly described as eclectic. Broadly speaking, the composer’s sound is neo-tonal or freely tonal, and her style straddles over neo-classic and neo-romantic elements, which the composer believes to be the most durable and personal, respectively."¹¹² However, the composer avoids to be categorized as a particular school or style, and her all-inclusive spirit of composition marks her as an independent eclectic composer. Accordingly, she does not restrict or

¹¹² Lin, 10.
control her approach in writing music with set rules of theory, but prefers extemporaneity that is guided by her own penchant in sound, sense of structure, and creativity in style. The result is a balanced fusion of various elements of past and present music, as well as elite and popular music. Diemer has used elements from the past for forms, genres, and references of various inspirations, and from the contemporary musical heritage, blends a wide spectrum of modern sounds and styles of both classic and pop musical cultures. Likewise, the use of piano is often extended, especially of the percussive use of piano, where strong ostinato figures or repeated motives of distinctive rhythmic profile dominate and stand out more than particular melody or harmony, over playing areas that cover places beyond the keyboard, according to the modern practice of experimentalism. Lastly, such essence of inclusiveness and expansion ultimately serves the greater purpose of embracing broader audience and appreciators of new music by producing versatile works for both young and old, for learning and pleasure, and for teaching and performing.
Chapter 3:

Emma Lou Diemer’s Pedagogical and Concert Piano Works

A. Easy/intermediate vs. advanced solo piano works

The table below shows two classifications of the composer’s solo piano works according to different difficulty levels and purposes. Of course, it can be said that all of the compositions offer essences valuable for teaching and can be considered for various performance occasions. However, for the purpose of clearer distinction and overview, the works with clear teaching purposes and agendas were classified as pedagogy literature, and the compositions with more performance-oriented disposition were listed as performance repertoire.

Table 2. Classifications of solo piano works according to difficulty levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Easy/Intermediate</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Performance Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>1945</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>1949</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suite No.1 for Children</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Winter for Piano</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suite No.2 for Children, “At the Zoo”</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time Pictures: Four Studies in Time</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>X X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four on a Row</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>X X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sound Pictures</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>X X</td>
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<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seven Pieces for Marilyn (A Little of This and That, Seven Pieces for Keyboard)</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little Toccata for Piano</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adventures in Sound</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Space Suite: 12 Short Pieces</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Three Pieces for Piano</td>
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<td>Fantasy for Piano</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>Hanukkah Song</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>Spirituals for Piano</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>Holidays of the Year for Piano</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>Reaching Out</td>
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<td>Angry March</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Happy Thoughts</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>Minimalisting, Thinking Back</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>A Waltz for Isolde</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bells on a Starry Night, Sailing on a Quiet Sea, We Won the Race</td>
<td>2011</td>
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B. Selected studies of representative pedagogical works

The first work with clear teaching instructions is *Time Pictures: Four Studies in Time*. As the title indicates, the work focuses on lessons of time in music, or rhythm and meter more specifically. The neo-classic element is strong in this work, as the forms of Baroque dance movements and genre are used; titles of Gavotte, Gigue, Invention, and Serenade are assigned to movements.\(^{113}\) First two pieces are characterized by the rhythmic elements of the genres, as Gavotte is in duple meter, 2/2, and Gigue in a fast compound meter, 6/8. The latter two pieces center more on the definitions of the titles, as Invention plays out an idea contrapuntally throughout the piece, and Serenade is essentially a song with accompaniment.

\(^{113}\) Outland, 129.
As the main title *Time Pictures* indicates, each piece features a different challenge in the meters and rhythms used. Gigue is in 6/8, seemingly ordinary meter, but it is challenging to keep a steady pulse of eighth notes throughout the entire piece, especially over the interpolated rests at a fast tempo (Example 1).

Example 1. *Time Pictures, Gigue*, mm. 1-4\(^{114}\) (© Copyright 1962 by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by Permission.)

The meter used in Gavotte and Invention is 2/2, which is unusual and can be tricky to young students in understanding the beats. However, the featured assignment of feeling the big beats is clearly guided in both pieces, as there are clear duple groupings of rhythms within half note punctuation on almost every beat (Example 2).

Example 2. *Time Pictures, Gavotte*, mm. 1-3 & Invention, mm. 1-3 (© Copyright 1962 by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by permission.)

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\(^{114}\) Diemer, *Time Pictures* (New York, NY: Boosey & Hawkes, 1962); Examples 1-4 come from the same source.
Serenade is in uneven 5/4, which is the most unsettling meter in the set, requiring a good sense of even quarter note pulse. The ubiquitous presence of the ostinato accompaniment presented in the beginning establishes the steady 5 beats (Example 3).

Example 3. *Time Pictures, Serenade* mm. 1-2 (© Copyright 1962 by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by Permission.)

In each piece, there are challenges other than the establishing and counting the correct beats, and they are indicated on the bottom of each piece by the composer, as “Technical features emphasized.”

115 In the first piece *Govotte*, the specified task is to differentiate articulations between the hands; throughout the piece, one hand is assigned staccato touch while the other is on legato touch. The main motive of accented chords require four notes to be played simultaneously, presenting main challenge in *Gigue*, especially for young students’ hands that are yet to be strengthened. *Invention*’s theme features stepwise motion, where a 5-note scale is pronounced in the beginning, and the middle section develops extended oscillation between two notes, creating a trill-like effect (Example 4).

Example 4. *Invention*, mm.10-12 (© Copyright 1962 by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by Permission.)

Composer’s detailed care can be seen in the provision of fingerings over these trills, taking into consideration, that playing with fingers 1 and 3 will provide more sustenance than playing with adjacent fingers. *Serenade* poses difficulty in balancing the melody and accompaniment between the two hands, which switches the roles from section to section. The dotted rhythm in the melody likely will pose added difficulty when the left hand has the melody.

Along with the clear study topics, *Time Pictures* features some interesting 20th-century idioms in mild versions for younger students. Motives in modal scales and polytonal writings create overall bright mood with consonant sonority, with occasional dissonances that are witty rather than biting. Other 20th-century compositional techniques include writings in quartal harmonies, free usage of the 7th chords, direct modulations, and chord clusters, all of which reappear extensively and elaborately in Diemer’s compositions to follow. In this way, the movements in *Time Pictures* appear to be miniature capsules of the composer’s general style and sound, and the work is also a great introductory set of simple modern pieces to young piano students.

The next easy level work for pedagogy that is geared towards young students is *Sound Pictures* (1971). Going beyond the modern concepts presented in *Time Pictures*, *Sound Pictures* provides a greater sampling collection of diverse sounds that are idiomatic of the twentieth century in ten easy miniature pieces. Along with more
dissonant harmonic language, more variety of texture in sound and extreme ranges on the keyboard is explored. The work is the composer’s first attempt in compilation of modern sounds for the solo piano, and suitable to young students, the pieces are not as elaborate as the later compilations of similar contents, such as *Adventures in Sound* or *Space Suite*. Cameron McGraw’s review of the work in *Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* in 1972 summarizes the work well, stating “Contemporary sounds and technical devices are the concern of the composer of these exceptional pieces, which should prove to be stimulating fare for the intermediate pianist (young or old) who is receptive to unusual and challenging musical ideas.”

Consistent with the synesthetic title of the suite, *Sound Pictures*, the titles with various visual descriptions for individual movements are depicted in creative variations of 20th-century sounds. In the first movement, *Clusters and Dots*, chord clusters and pointillistic punctuations of eighth-note figures correspond to the title. Direct chromatic transposition of perfect fifth and octave intervals are prominent throughout the piece, along with uneven meter phrasing. The piece is essentially in 7/4, but written out as alternating 4/4 and 4/3, seemingly to accommodate the young students’ understanding. Hands crossing technique is introduced as well (Example 5).

Example 5. *Sound Pictures, Clusters and Dots*, mm.1-3 (© Copyright 1971 by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by Permission.)

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117 Diemer, *Sound Pictures* (New York, NY: Boosey & Hawkes, 1971); Examples 5-14 come from the same source.
Second piece, *Circles* is a free canon of five note motive between the two hands, where the motive itself always returns to the beginning note. In the beginning of the piece, *comes* imitates *dux* two beats after the lead at perfect fifth above, and then at octave above in the middle section. The piece ends with the opening imitation, circling back to the beginning (Example 6).

*Example 6. Sound Pictures, Circles, mm.1-2, & the last three measures (© Copyright 1971 by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by Permission.)*

*Contraction and Expansion* is written entirely chromatically, where two hands move in contrary motion. The passage from m. 24 to m. 31, involves left hand crossing over the right hand, where the chromatic ascension in the left hand is separated by octave displacements, creating successive intervals of alternating minor 9ths and major 7ths.
Such technique is one of Diemer’s favorite variation methods. The piece is marked *Fast, in one*, and thus most challenging aspect of this piece for young students is to count a steady subdivision of three, especially over long chains of suspended notes across the measures (Example 7).

Example 7. *Sound Pictures, Contraction and Expansion*, mm16-21 and mm24-28
(© Copyright 1971 by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by permission.)

*Double Dot* refers to harmonies in 2nds, which is heard throughout the movement. This movement is also a free canon, similar to the second movement, *Circles*; the theme is imitated in the beginning at perfect fourth below, one measure after, and at octave below in the middle part. The movement is in clear ABA form with A in invertible counterpoint, where the return of A has two hands switching roles of *dux* and *comes* from the beginning; in the beginning, the right hand led with the left hand following perfect fourth below, and in the return, the left hand leads with the right hand perfect fifth above. The meters used are 2/2 and 3/2, posing challenge of performing the unusual meters and counting over the changing meters (Example 8).
Incline and Plateau, is the shortest piece in the set, but with much musical substance. It is merely 9 measures long, divided into two parts. The beginning section consists of continuously expanding upward motives that climb over four-octave range and sustained pedal, and in the second section, the motives come to halting chords over changed meter. There are five different pitch collections, all of which are presented twice, first as the climbing motive in the first section, and second as the chords in the second section.

The harmonic language is very dissonant, but as the dissonant intervals between the notes grow wider apart through the successive climbing motive in the first section, the resulting sonority is wonderfully awry, rather than jarring. Also, there is a clear pitch center, D, which is heard as the lowest note in every measure. Notes with numerous accidentals and frequently changing clefs pose much challenge in learning the piece,
along with the hands crossing each other over the changing and extreme registers,
reaching to the last highest note C8 and a low D1 on the keyboard. The hemiola effect
alluded by the change of meter between the two sections needs attention as well: the 3/2
section is in three beats, and the 6/4 section is in two, with subdivision of three quarter
notes in each beat (Example 9).

Example 9. *Sound Pictures, Incline and Plateau.* (© Copyright 1971 by Boosey
& Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by Permission.)

There are two kinds of parallel motions in the movement *Parallel*. One is in the
movement between the two hands, and the other is in the movement of the chords in each
hand. The piece is written entirely in perfect fifths and fourths (Example 10).

Example 10. *Sound Pictures, Parallels*, mm. 1-2 (© Copyright 1971 by Boosey
& Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by Permission.)
The following piece *Strata*, combines the concepts from the two previous movements. Upward climb over varying octaves of *Incline and Plateau*, and parallel motion between the two hands from *Parallels* reappear in this movement, varied in texture by the use of extreme registers (Example 11). The movement is in clear ABA form, where the B section features quartal chords and augmented chords.

Example 11. *Sound Pictures, Strata*, mm. 3-8 & mm. 13-20 (© Copyright 1971 by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by Permission.)

*Angles* contains two-note motives that paint jagged contour throughout the piece.

It is through-composed, atonal piece, featuring minor third, tritone, and minor seventh
intervals prominently in the motive. Rhythmic variances found in metric displacement (mm. 7-8) and augmentation writing (mm. 11-12) bring sophistication to the seemingly simple piece (Example 12).

Example 12. Sound Pictures, Angles, mm. 1-2, mm. 7-8, mm. 11-12 (© Copyright 1971 by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by Permission.)

*Particles* appears to be the most difficult number out of the set, featuring much more intricate rhythm and chromatic writing. The piece is through-composed on chromatic three-note figure that is playfully spun out with rhythmic variations. The pitch center is A, but it is nearly undetectable aurally because of the heavy chromatic writing.
Executing the correct rhythm with interpolated rests over the fast tempo adds to the difficulty (Example 13).

Example 13. Sound Pictures, Particles, mm. 11-14 (© Copyright 1971 by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by Permission.)

Infinity, the final number in the set, features glissando playing. Timing the four octave glissandos over five beats, evenly and with pianissimo dynamic is the main challenge to the performer in the piece, along with meter changes and successive hand crossings, over a long crescendo of six measures long. Aside from the glissandos and octaves, two set classes make up the harmonies of the piece, (016) and (025), more specifically, a tritone chord with one semitone, and a minor seventh chord with a minor third (Example 14).

Example 14. Sound Pictures, Infinity, mm. 2-4 (© Copyright 1971 by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Reprinted by Permission.)
Compared to the composer’s first easy level work, *Time Pictures*, much more grown effort in pedagogy can be seen in this work, evident with increased number of specific finger numbers, descriptive tempo and mood indications, and variety of textures and characters created. Unlike the composer’s later works for pedagogy, it is unclear whether *Sound Pictures* was intended as graded exercise set or not, but there is an overall increase in difficulty throughout the consecutive pieces. What is clear is that the set was intended both for private study and performance of 20th-century solo piano music, accessible to younger and less advanced pianists, and it was written because the composer thought that there was a need for repertoire as such.118 Continued from the previous work teaching material, *Time Pieces*, *Sound Pictures* demonstrates the composer’s continuous efforts in the direction of building modern repertoire for teaching and performance for the young pianists.

*Adventures in Sound* employs many of the similar subjects that were covered in *Sound Pictures*, but it is more extensive, explorative, and colorful than the previous set. It is composer’s first set of graded pieces, ranging from low to moderate difficulty over 15 pieces that feature various twentieth century genres and techniques. Many of the individual movements are kept short and simple, as in *Sound Pictures*, but few of the more difficult pieces hold more developed and drawn-out forms. As seen in the previous teaching materials, the composer provides specific instructions throughout the work, specifying main subjects covered in each piece in the table of contents and providing supplementary explanations for the ones that use extended techniques. Along with the descriptive titles, moods and characters are also further specified in each movement.

118 Johns, 73.
Overall, there is much more detailed instruction with regards to the execution of the modern techniques and desired sound effect in this work.

Along with the modern harmony and usage of meters heard and seen in previous teaching works, additional modern music topics covered include various clusters, impressionist sonority, percussive use of the piano on the rack, various ostinatos, dampening and playing over the strings inside the piano. In general, *Adventures in Sound* offers many more imaginative sounds in modern idioms, especially of extended techniques, where playing the piano involves using the instrument beyond the keyboard. The following movements listed use extended techniques, in the order of difficulty: “Jazz Echoes,” “Old Spanish Town,” “A Harp in the Sky,” and “Wind in the West.”

“Jazz Echoes” starts with an arm cluster, to be pressed silently by the left arm throughout the entire piece. The composer indicates that the cluster should include as many of white keys as possible, suggesting the inclusion of C2 to F4, which would require the entire left arm for the range. The right hand plays a motive with jazzy articulations over the pressed keys, producing echo throughout the piece, and the cluster is to be held until the sound dissipates in the air. “Old Spanish Town” features passages with tapping on the music rack, alternating with the on-the-keys passages. The movement begins with the tapping of eighth note patterns, establishing a good sense of steady eighth note subdivision—the tapping aids in preparing for the rhythm of the following pitched passage, which contains syncopation and tied notes (Example 15).

Example 15. *Adventures in Sound, Old Spanish Town*, mm. 1-9

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The percussive drumming creates a fun quasi-castanet effect accompanying the pitched parts. The piece is a simple two-theme variation, where the tapped passage recurs in slightly altered rhythm, and the on-the-keys passage is varied by repetition in increasingly higher octaves at successive reappearances. Thus, the themes are kept simple and easy, but at the same time, interesting with the mild variations.

“\textit{A Harp in the Sky}” and “\textit{Wind in the West}” involve dampening the strings inside the piano. The last two pieces of the series, they are the more difficult numbers out of the set. The difficulty lies in the interpretation of the scores, as it extensively uses the unusual notation for some of the 20\textsuperscript{th}-century extended techniques. The composer provides extra instructions on handling the piano interior as well as understanding the unusual notations (Example 16).

Example 16. \textit{Adventures in Sound, p.26}
In both pieces, the writing is repetitive and sparse on the whole, but there are technical difficulties that require special attention. In “Harp in the Sky,” the main challenge lies in dampening of the assigned strings that move from one set to another and playing over the dampened strings in rhythm. In the harmonic design, equal division of octave in major third interval is in use, where around C, E, and Ab, major third intervals are further emphasized by employing sets (014) and (024). “Wind in the West” consists of contrasting sounds of dampened and undampened strings in simple three-part form. The main 20th-century feature is the beamed accelerando/ritardando ostinatos that are paired with crescendo/decrescendos. The piece requires careful counting, especially over extended repetition found in the middle section of the piece. The composer also provides specific timings for certain pauses and the middle section, which calls for extra attention. Lastly, there is also the challenge of steady control in pianissimo writings, prominent in
outer sections. The two pieces will require not only the agility of the pianist’s physical facility, but more so, the artistic sense to correctly interpret the markings and execute intended sonority of the piece.

There are few other idiosyncratic features and characterizations that bring added charm to the set. In *Hazy Afternoon*, the composer mixes tone clusters and five-note scale ideas in producing misty atmosphere: set to *pianissimo* and *pianississimo* dynamics, the notes in five-note scales are sustained throughout the scale, forming a cluster after all five notes are pressed (Example 17).

Example 17. *Adventures in Sound, Hazy Afternoon*, mm. 7-11

![Example 17](image)

Imitations of other instrument sounds, such as castanet and harp in afore mentioned pieces, *Old Spanish Town* and *A Harp in the Sky*, have been experimented, and more effectively, the sounds of bell and guitar come through in movements like *In a High Steeple* and *The Guitar*. In the movement *The Guitar*, the roll markings for chords have arrows, indicating the directions of rolls, which mimic sounds from strumming across the guitar strings (Example 18).

Example 18. *Adventures in Sound, The Guitar*, mm. 6-7 & mm. 13-14
“In a Deep Cave,” the composer adds descriptive narrations “a light appears,” and “we escape” over harmonically and thematically distinctive points, adding programmatic highlights to the music. The piece is composed entirely of 2nd intervals, except for the two points, where chords of thirds and glissando make exceptional appearances (Example 19).

Example 19. *Adventures in Sound, In a Deep Cave*, mm. 13-end

*Go Fourth* is written entirely with driven melodic and harmonic chords of fourth intervals,
reflecting the witty pun in the title. Similarly, *The Kangaroo* is composed entirely with 7th and 2nd interval chords, which are inversions of each other; featuring wide leaps of 7th chords, septuplets runs, and trills, the movement convincingly paints a leaping Kangaroo through the sound. The movement is the only piece in the set that bears dedication, specified as “for the 4th grade of Cold Spring School, Santa Barbara, California, January 1986 (and their teacher, Pete Shannon).” Although *The Kangaroo* is placed third to the last in the series, it is the most challenging work pianistically, using full range of the keyboard and involving fast scales and hemiola rhythms.

As the titles used in individual movements reflect more descriptive and imaginative characters than the ones in previous teaching materials, there are more particular and inventive features in *Adventures in Sound*. They work well not only as teaching pieces, but also as performing repertoire for the beginning and intermediate students. The composer had written in the forward of the work that she had intended the pieces to be “enjoyable as well as challenging,” and the goals were well accomplished in this set.

In 1988, immediately following the *Adventures in Sound*, Diemer wrote another extensive series of graded pieces for pedagogy, *Space Suite: 12 Short Pieces*. The composer writes in the forward, that the pieces are ordered from “fairly elementary to advanced” and that they “present to the player technical and expressive challenges.”

Written during the peak of the composer’s explorative years, even more innovative and assorted styles of modern sounds make up the set, ventured in twelve short pieces that are

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unified with space theme. While many features seen in previous teaching sets reappear, sounds and techniques applied in this series are the most avant-garde and unusual thus far, including twelve-tone method, minimalism, and wide spectrum of experimental sounds using diverse extended techniques.

There are four movements that require on-the-string playing: No.2 Out in Space, No.4 Space People Dancing, No.7 The Surface of the Moon, and No.11 Data Bass (and Treble). All of these will require memorization and removal of music rack to play effectively, as it involves using the inner parts of the piano. No.2 Out in Space explores sounds made from plucking and sweeping the strings inside the piano with the fingernails, over silently depressed tone clusters in low register. The composer provides very detailed guidance, including the necessary preparation of the piano, such as marking certain notes with tape, exact cluster of notes to be pressed silently, types of motion involved, and how to interpret the score (Example 20).

Example 20. Space Suite, No.2 Out in Space, opening measure

The passages with brushed strings sound metallic, creating cold, extraterrestrial atmosphere with eerie echo made by the silently pressed cluster, while the plucked strings resemble muffled electronic beeping sound. The whole piece is marked “very freely” and

121 Diemer, Space Suite; Examples 20, 22-25 come from the same source and are used with permission from Colla Voce Music Inc.
without bar lines, allowing ample time to switch from one motion to another, which is especially needed at the frequent clef changes in the piece. No.4 Space People Dancing also contains similar sheen and clink in the sonority, as it also uses fingernail glissandos and more predominantly, tapping on the strings with fingernails and knocking on the crosspiece with knuckles inside the piano. Written on jazzy dance rhythm with off-beat accents, the piece is an interesting study of rhythm for young students, accompanied with adventurous sounds.

No.7 The Surface of the Moon and No.11 Data Bass both involve playing over dampened strings. In No.7, the on-string glissando reappears, as well as the technique of tapping on the strings, but with fingertips instead of fingernails; the resulting sound is more tender and warmer in texture. The composer gives the option of playing No. 7 and No. 11 on the keys, in the case of unavailability of a grand piano, and for the alternative playing, she specifies that scales may substitute for the “sting patting” passages. The measures with minor third chords allude to Debussy’s Claire de Lune’s famous opening of rising and falling motive (Example 21).122

Example 21. Suite Bergamasque, Claire de Lune, opening123 and Space Suite, No.7 The Surface of the Moon, third system

122 Johns, 60.
123 Claude Debussy, Suite Bergamasque, 1905.
The piece is marked “Slowly, ad lib.” and composed without bar-lines, like No.2, reflecting fluidity in interpretation and timing, and in tune with the serene character that the piece captures.

No.11 is the most demanding number in the set, and the composer indicates that it also can be performed as an ensemble piece, involving two or three players. The piece is to be played over dampened strings throughout the piece, over low, middle, and high registers of the piano. The most difficult element of the piece is in the rhythm, which is frequently changing from triplet to duple division, heavily syncopated with rests, off-beat accents, and tied notes. There is no meter specification, and thus the bar lines function to divide a group of motives rather than beats. A steady sense of quarter note is mandatory, as it is the common denominator of all the subdivided rhythms in the piece. The composer writes in the note, “It is easier to play this piece standing up,”124 which is a helpful instruction. The passages with dampened strings change their ranges throughout the piece, requiring mobility of the player, up and down the strings and the keys. Also, there are passages that require patting the beat with the foot simultaneously with the playing, which brings added challenge of coordination and agility to perform the piece. The piece also works effectively without the dampening technique, with its attractive and fascinating rhythm works, albeit without the special sound effect from dampened stings.

124 Diemer, Space Suit; No.11 Data Bass (and Treble), notes.
Two pieces in the set stand out in the choices of their genres: *No. 1 Billions of Stars* and *No. 3 The Rings of Saturn*. *No.1* is a 12-tone composition, written with sparse texture and simple arrangements of the row. The row is used in its prime form only, and the main theme contains the discrete set of the first tetra-chord. Similar to the tone row in Diemer’s previous intermediate level 12-tone composition, *Four on a Row*, consonant intervals are predominant in the adjacent intervals, with perfect fifth and major sixth intervals dominant and without any half steps in the row. Also similar to the design of the row seen in *Four on a Row*, the perfect fourth and perfect fifth intervals are emphasized, as the first two discrete tetrachords use the same set (0235), and the last tetrachord (0127), variant from the first two. The tone row for *No.1 Billions of Stars* is as follows:

\[ 3 \ T \ 8 \ 5 \ 2 \ 9 \ 7 \ 4 \ 1 \ E \ 6 \ 0 \]

The piece presents the row three times, first in pointillistic style of each note appearing one at a time and spread apart from one another, then as chords of discrete tetrachords, and lastly combining the two motives. The beginning, middle, and the ending are united with the first tetrachord, [3T85]. Played over abundant pedal marking, the piece paints a picture of both nebulous ambience of the space and particulars stars shining through the vastness. In the composer’s notes about the piece, she stated that she wanted to create musical essence out of the twelve-tone method, and that the expression of the piece parallels the compositional method, as it “create(s) a picture of picking out stars as you
pick out notes on the piano.”

Another prominent 20th-century compositional style, minimalism, is used in No. 3 *The Rings of Saturn*, where the entire composition consists of a pattern of moving 16th notes. Written in clear ABA, the piece centers around E and its dominant B: the bass notes of outer sections delineate A Major chord around the pitch center E, and the middle section outlines E Major chord in the bass line, around B. The pattern, heard from the beginning to the end before the penultimate measure, is made of four 16th notes of dominant 7th chords without the third, moving from one 7th chord to the next without any functional resolution of the 7th note. In other words, the planing technique of broken 7th chords makes up the entire piece. At the end of the piece, different 7th chord is heard at the penultimate measure: after the piece cadences tonally in E, conveniently set up by the dominant 7th chord, the composer throws a rolled 7th chord containing minor 3rd and major 7th intervals, giving an unexpected color produced from clashing minor 2nds against the two centers of the piece, E and B (Example 22).

Example 22. *Space Suite, No. 3 The Rings of Saturn*, last 4 measures

Many of Diemer’s usual features reappear in several movements, such as in No. 5 *Space Monkey*, No. 6 *Dance in the Light-Year*, No. 8 *Frequency Bands*, and No. 12 *Toward*.

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125 Johns, 72.
Mars. No. 5 and No.8 remind composer’s previous compositions, Monkey Dance from the second children’s suite, written in her early period, and the fourth etude of Seven Etudes, written in the early middle period. Written with much repetition of the motive and rhythmic accents, Space Mankey calls to mind the character of Monkey Dance, and the main theme resembles the 2nd theme of the pervious work as well. Frequency Bands presents tremolos throughout the piece, similar to the tremolo study found in the Seven Etudes, but is less dense in writing, without layers of counterpoint or expansive chordal elaborations existent in the etude. Frequency Bands is written entirely with quartal harmony, composer’s favorite sonorities heard in numerous compositions thus far. Dance in the Light-Year also uses quartal harmonies, and includes a passage in quintal harmony, inverting the theme in quartal harmony, played over lyrical phrases in changing meters (Example 23).

Example 23. Space Suite, Dance in the Light-Year, mm. 15-20

No.12 Toward Mars is a summarizing movement, which includes many elements both presented and not presented in the previous movements of the suite. The use of extreme registers high and low, wide dynamic ranges, various articulations, rhythmic writing with off-beat accents and syncopation, ostinatos, chord planing, asymmetric phrases, tone
clusters, and quartal/quintal harmonies, all of which are Diemer’s favorite compositional gestures and sound, make up this finale piece to the suite.

Underneath the simple texture, No. 9 Radio Waves consists of advanced compositional technique involving minor 2nd and its inversion, major 7th intervals. The piece is through-composed but with distinguishable three sections, delineated by sets used, main motives, and pitch centers; in the beginning section, set (0156) is prominent with the trill motive centering around E, which shifts to B via half step relation to the Bb in the right hand, near the transition into the middle section. The middle section features pentatonic set of (01478), as the right hand figuration of EFBC, taken from the two trill motives in the first section, is played over Ab drone in the left hand, also reached via half steps. Third section returns the trill motive within set (0145), centered on G#, enharmonically transitioned from the previous section’s central note, Ab. The last section also recalls the opening EF sonority as harmonic chord instead of its original trill form, placed over the trill motive on new center G# (Example 24).

Example 24. Space Suite, Radio Waves, mm. 3-4 (0156), mm. 22-25 (01478), mm. 33-35 (0145)
The resulting sound of the piece is a mysterious, yet concurrently persuasive depiction of attempted contact “with someone in outer space.”\textsuperscript{126} \textit{No. 9} is a good example of the composer’s compositional sophistry of delivering artistically engaging and technically accessible piece for young pianists, through advanced, modern music theory.

\textit{No.10 Walkie-Talkie} features a call-and-response writing, and a “joke” that the composer asks the player to find.\textsuperscript{127} There are four pairs of conversations between the low and high register voices, giving an allusion of a man and a woman talking over a long distance. The leading voice in the bass clef “talks” in staccato, loud, and fast manner, while the responding voice in the high register repeats in legato, soft, and slow temperament throughout the piece, until the expectation is thrown off in the last conversation. In the last pair of conversation, the low voice finally gives in to the high

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{126} Diemer, \textit{Space Suite}, notes.  
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.}
voice’s way, softly recalling the opening melody in “slow, lugubrious” approach, in which the high voice should presumably respond in the similar fashion. However, the high voice retorts “very fast” and detached, which appears to be the joke, as it continues to contend, and not succumb to the low voice’s lead. The piece holds a simple ABCA form, as the first and the last pairs of conversations are of the same melody and accompaniment. The piece amusingly portrays the conversation over walkie-talkie, while teaching to play over changing clefs and register, uneven phrases, contrasting articulations, and quartal, tritone, and quintal harmonies.

*Three Pieces for Piano* from 1991 is the first piano solo work written in the composer’s late period. Commissioned by The Music Teachers’ Association of California for “Friends of Today’s Music” project, the work holds the purposes of prodding teachers and students “to be aware of current expressions in music,” encouraging composers to write modern works for intermediate level pianists.\(^{128}\) The work is much more elaborate than previous works for intermediate level, with lengthy developments in each of the three movements. Written with much artistic and technical substance, the work presents ample challenges in both piano study and performance experience for developing pianists.

The first piece is a theme and variations, where the 17-measure chord theme is varied seven times. Within the theme and variations form, there is a two-fold dramatic scheme, where the theme and the first three variations progress calmly to a breakpoint of fermata at the end of the third variation, and the last four variations move from an

“expressive, rubato” beginning to a dramatically driven ending with a cadenza-like coda. The embedded melody in the chord series of the theme is not heard until the first variation, and thus the theme, gives an introductory feel to the piece. The melody, formed from the top notes of the chords, is brought out by legato playing over the staccato chords, of which the composer reiterates the voicing in her instruction at the beginning of the Variation I. Variation II and III offer slight variations from Variation I by breaking the chords as consistent 16th notes, instead of harmonic chords interpolated with rests as heard in the Theme and the Variation I (Example 25).

Example 25. *Three Pieces for Piano, Theme and Variation, Theme, Var I-III*, first three measures

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129 Diemer, *Three Pieces for Piano*; Examples 25 & 27 come from the same source and are used with permission from Colla Voce Music Inc.
In the following variations, the texture thickens increasingly, and dramatic build up takes place over more elaborate alterations to the theme. Variation IV keeps the texture of constant 16th notes and melody, but adds to them a moving bass-line. The 16th note grouping has changed from the four-note pattern in the previous variations to the three-note grouping, creating fluid flow against the straight four beat (Example 26).

Example 26. *Three Pieces for Piano*, movement I, Var. IV, first three measures
Variation V takes the melody in the left hand, doubled in octave, over which the right hand plays the chords. Variation VI delves into the lower registers, keeping the melody accented with fortissimo dynamic in the bass register, and quick downward figurations underneath the melody reach deep regions of the keyboard throughout the variation. Variation VII drives the piece to the climax, with rich chordal writing and expansive coverage of the high and low registers, played over fortissimo dynamic. The unyielding variation halts over a fermata after a big ritardando, which takes the piece into the cadenza ending. The finishing passage features vast arpeggiations of the last two chords of the variation, to be played freely and slowly in the last two measures. The fermata placed on the last note of the piece, along with a slur, alludes attaca playing to the next piece.

The second piece is titled *Slow Dance* and is the most lyrical of the three, where the composer instructs the players to perform “expressively, with plenty of time taken,” in the notes.\(^{130}\) The composer also points out that the piece should be memorized, as the middle section’s broken 7th chord patterns played over various registers in alternating hands may present difficulty otherwise. The piece is structured around different 7th chords, clearly outlined in the voicing for the most part, except when the melody is placed in different register (Example 27).

Example 27. *Three Pieces for Piano, Slow Dance*, mm. 1-3, & mm. 6-8

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\(^{130}\) Ibid.
Written in ABA’ form, the A section at the end returns with melody in octave and the ending altered to include the closing portion of the B section. In an issue of *The American Music Teacher*, Helen Marlais writes with regards to the movement, “This intoxicating work written with contemporary idioms could be for any student who naturally gravitates to romantic music.”\(^{131}\) Indeed, the rich texture, pining melody, and the dramatic climax of the piece point to neo-romanticism in its timbre and gesture.

Third piece is written in the typical Emma Lou Diemer finish style, to be “played with much energy and spirit.”\(^{132}\) It features her favorite 20\(^{th}\)-century idioms such as extensive ostinato, jazzy syncopation, frequently changing meters, and playing over dampened strings. It also comprises of harmonic language in diminished fifth and augmented fourth intervals throughout the piece. Although one hand occupies some intricate syncopated passages, the difficulty level is controlled by having the other hand

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\(^{132}\) Ibid.
play ostinato, so the player can focus on the hand with harder rhythm. However, *Fast Dance* is the most difficult piece to learn among the three, not only with the extra rhythmic complexity and required coordination, but also with abundant accidentals that make the note-reading difficult.

In this work, there is a stronger musical cohesion between the movements than in the previous solo piano suite works of the composer thus far; there is a programmatic (i.e., extra-musical) unity in previous works with numerous movements, such as *Suite No.2 for Children, “At the Zoo, ”* or in more recent work *Space Suite*, but there is no strong musical unity, such as a shared musical motive. In *Space Suite*, the last piece contains many compositional ideas used in previous movements, (such as the use of ostinatos, extreme registers and dynamics, chord planing, etc.) but it does not recall any specific musical motive or sound from them. In contrast, there are musical factors in *Three Pieces for Piano*, which indicate a unity between the movements, strongly supporting a collective performance of the work as a set for greater effects. Especially between the first two pieces, there are gestures of cohesion that bind the two movements as continuation of a thought: the fermata over slurred finishing note at the end of the first movement provides lingering resonance, suggesting attaca playing into the second piece, *Slow Dance*. The constant eighth note chords of the opening section also reminisce the last variation of the first movement, further strengthening the connection between the two movements. The scalar design of the melody of the second movement also bears similarity to the melody of the first movement. Lastly, the *Slow Dance* finishes with steady eighth note chords that climb up, recalling the motive of Variation VII from the previous movement, which sets the segue into the *Fast Dance*. The last movement features a constant eighth note ostinato
as its main musical component, providing a strong contrast to the previous movement, but at the same time also becoming to the previous two movements. Thus, while it is possible to extract different movements from the set to perform, as the individual movements all hold substantial musical expressions, the three movements should be performed together for the fullest appreciation of the piece, as the motivic unity of a constant eighth note in various settings offers much more interesting musical unfolding throughout the work. Accordingly, *Three Pieces for Piano* requires much more of pianists both to learn and perform, and although labeled for intermediate pianists, it really requires strong musical maturity and considerable prowess, suitable for early advanced pianists in actuality.

With *Reaching Out* in 2004, Diemer returns to composing a graded series for pedagogical purpose. The work was written as a part of *The FJH Contemporary Keyboard Editions*, at the request of the Director of Keyboard Publications for the company, Helen Marlais, who is also a pedagogue and author of several music education books, including various piano series. *The FJH Contemporary Keyboard Editions* is a series that endorses noteworthy contemporary music for keyboard, with the goal of “expanding students’ horizons,” in the modern repertoire, while cultivating both musicality and technicality that supplement the traditional repertoire.133 *Reaching Out* was the first of several works that would be published by the publisher.

*Reaching Out* holds eighteen small pieces, ordered easy to intermediate. The collection addresses a wide variety of musical subjects, such as “moods, tempos, meters,  

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registers, articulations, and dynamics,”134 and bearing similar pedagogical purposes as previous teaching compilations, such as *Adventures in Sound* and *Space Suite*. Although more numerous in number, in comparison to the previous two series, the pieces in *Reaching Out* are simpler and less exploratory than those in *Adventures in Sound* and *Space Suite*. Some non-traditional technique has been explored, but not as extensively as in the other two series for teaching. Instead, there is more focus on creating musically sensitive mood and ambience, with lyrical emphasis and thicker layering of sounds, which often involve much pedal playing and hand-crossing technique.

Among others, the pieces that are especially lyrical are *Slow, Sad Waltz*, *Answering*, *Minor Serenade*, *Another Moonlight Serenade*, *Remembering*, *Reaching Out*, and *Hand Over Hand*, all of which carry sentimental musicality. *Slow, Sad Waltz* and *Minor Serenade* both feature melancholy and contemplative singing line over accompaniment, requiring good sense of phrasing and balance. Both pieces are structured in clear ABA form, but the latter includes wider range and more moving and varied accompaniment, containing occasional melodic snippet inclusion, metrically displaced accompaniment pattern, and expansive upward arpeggiation (Example 28).

Example 28. *Reaching Out, Minor Serenade*, mm. 9-18135

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134 Diemer, *Reaching Out*, notes by the composer.
135 Diemer, *Reaching Out*; Examples 28-30 come from the same source and are used with permission from The FJH Music Company Inc.
Answering features legato playing of the melody in both hands, alternating. The composer informs on the bottom of the piece, Another Moonlight Serenade, that the piece was inspired by Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata. Indeed, the piece recalls the famous moonlight music, both in its motive and ambience. The well-known triplet motive from Beethoven’s sonata has been transformed into a four-note pattern, over the slow moving left hand bass line (Example 29).

Example 29. Reaching Out, Another Moonlight Serenade, mm. 1-4 & Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata, 1st movement, mm. 1-3

Composer’s pedal markings are specific and important in this piece, as there are particular sonorities of blurred effect that the composer intended to capture with the pedal usage. Instead of the melodic line found in Beethoven’s work, Diemer adds a hand-crossing motive, adding a layer above the moving eighth figuration in the right hand, and the same technique is employed in *Remembering, Reaching Out, and Hand Over Hand* also. All of these pieces require much control of the direction of the lines, voicing, and balance of dynamic between layers.

*Black Is the Color* and *Icicles* use pitch-class theory in minimal and simple harmonic design, along with some amusing compositional ideas. The former explores playing over black keys only, and it is the only piece with a key signature. It is interesting to note that Gb major key signature is assigned to the piece, while the piece only uses four notes in its entirety, pitch-set [Ab, Bb, Db, Eb], which has the prime form (0257), one of the composer’s favorites, found elsewhere in the series. The piece also features rhythmic clapping along with the black key playing. *Icicles* features dual pitch centers, written entirely in prime form (027) of two pitch-class sets, [CFG] and [EbABb], which bear T3 relation to each other. Each hand takes one set in a motive that repeats throughout the entire piece, out of sync from one another, creating the poly-metric effect. Artistically, the angular, staccato, 3-note motive on dual pitch centers and two different
progressing timelines create the impression of sound prism, imaginatively portraying the icicles of uneven lengths in random layers and various transparencies (Example 30).

Example 30. *Reaching Out, Icicles*, mm. 5-7

Many of the composer’s favorite compositional gestures also revisit in different pieces of the set, within varied context. *Happy Dance, Drumming It Up,* and *Waves* feature quartal and/or quintal harmonies, along with other topics; syncopated rhythm (*Happy Dance*), driving rhythm within meter changes (*Drumming It Up*), and repetition of motive within the beam-notation for pairing crescendo/decrescendo with accelerando/ritardando effects (*Waves*), which was first seen in *Adventures in Sound* and recalled in this set with a different extra-musical association. *Anger* and *Teasing* feature tone clusters, while *Hand Over Hand* and *Surprises* present planing triads in contrasting textures of lyrical and detached playing, respectively. *Echo Dream* includes playing over dampened strings, although not as extensively as seen in previous graded series. The last two pieces in the set, *Chatter* and *Busy Toccata*, are the most difficult and comprehensive pieces that contain many features of the composer’s trademark gestures and sounds, covering many of the mentioned above in more drawn out forms and complex harmonic/rhythmic settings.
Just as in the graded series from the middle period, the composer provides extra instructions at the bottom of several pieces. They are effective guides for teaching, such as which lines to voice, how to pedal, what fingerings to use, and what kind of motion to employ, while there are also indications of important performance concerns or musical ideas, such as what sounds to listen for and create. Although this series bears much similarity to the previous series in its use of modern harmonic language and gestures, in comparison to the previous series, it is simpler in its designs overall, with more weight on musicality over exploration of the modern technique and new sonorities.

Most of the composer’s latest outputs for solo piano are for teaching easy level students and are published by FJH. In 2007, *Angry March* was written for Helen Marlais’ *Contemporary Collage-Music of the 21st Century, Vol.1, Book 1*, and this piece is a short learning piece appropriate for beginners. Though minimalistic in its overall style, there is a clever design of threesome in the work: it is composed entirely of three triad block chords in three different articulations. The main motive is three measures long, and the phrase is repeated nine times over twenty seven measures. The repetitions are varied over different registers between the two hands, presenting challenge of finding the same chords in different octaves to beginners, while effectively expressing the intended mood of the title.

In the following year, *Happy Thoughts* was written for the *Book 2* of the same series. The piece is a short study of uneven meters and quartal harmony. It consists of two distinctive themes, written in 7/8 and 5/8 respectively, and both themes are repeated.

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137 The piece technically ends on the twenty-eighth measure, where the chord from the previous measure is tied over with a fermata and an instruction “hold until sound is gone.” Thus this measure can be seen as an extension of the twenty-seventh measure.
verbatim, separated by a short transition. With the four measure coda which ends the piece, the form of *Happy Thoughts* can be construed as ABCABC’, as the coda is reminiscent of the transition section. The biggest challenge of the piece for young pianists will be to feel the consistent eighth notes and to observe the down beat eighth note rests. Other than the tasks above, the piece is written to well accommodate beginners, repeating chord motives and moving via stepwise motion without complicated fingerings, and keeping hands in five finger positions for the most part; m. 20 presents an unusual fingering of stretch between 4 and 5 in the left hand. It can be considered that instead of 4, 1 will be a better option, followed by 3 in m. 21 on Eb. Teachers should guide the students about tucking the thumb under going from m. 19 to m. 20, and having 3 go over 5 from m. 20 to m. 21 (Example 31).

Example 31. *Happy Thoughts*, mm. 19-21\(^{138}\) (Used with permission from The FJH Music Company Inc.)

![Example 31](image)

The composer effectively paints jittery excitement in *Happy Thoughts*, the feeling expressed through constantly moving eighth notes over unsettling meters. This is a well written work for students, fun to play and learn 20\(^{th}\)-century concepts.

The composer suffered a stroke in 2009, and although she has produced works for

\(^{138}\) Diemer, *Happy Thoughts* (Fort Lauderdale, FL; The FJH Music Company Inc., 2008).
other mediums, there was a hiatus in writing for solo piano in the year. *Minimalisting* and
*Thinking Back* were written in 2010, and as the title suggests, *Minimalisiting* is written in
the style of minimalism. It is written almost entirely in the repetition of the same
rhythmic motive of 3-3-2 groupings of eighth notes, with the exception in the transition
to the return of the modified A section (Example 32).

Example 32. *Minimalising* mm. 1-4

[Music notation image]

Over the three-fold scheme of ABA’ structure, the pitch center C shifts gradually to D,
via downward whole and half step motions throughout. Unlike the previous two learning
pieces, *Minimalisiting* requires a bit more pianistic coordination, as it consists of heavier
chords which jump from one octave to another, along with constant syncopation in the
rhythm. Bringing out the difference in the articulation between the two hands, along with
keeping track of the repeated motive, without rushing in steady eighths at the marked
tempo (which is rather fast) may also be challenging to the students.

*Thinking Back* is a lyrical piece, contrasting in its mood and texture to
*Minimalising*. It is through-composed, with a loose three-part structure ABC, where C
consists of fractions of A and B sections. Quartal and quintal harmonies are predominant,

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139 Diemer, *Minimalising* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: The FJH Music Company Inc., 2010).
varied from the opening motive. The opening motive of upward perfect 4th followed by tritone interval in the right hand is the main motive and the source of unity throughout the piece; its variant form in the left hand appears in the middle section and it also comes back to herald the beginning of the last section, along with its mutation first heard in the middle section which finishes the piece with cohesive circularity (Example 33). For the beginner level students, a little more challenge exists in note-reading, as there are a number of accidentals used.

Example 33. Thinking Back, m. 1, m. 10, mm. 19-20, mm. 26-29\textsuperscript{140} (Used with permission from The FJH Music Company Inc.)

The most recent compositions are Bells on a Starry Night, Sailing on a Quiet Sea, We Won the Race from 2010, published in 2011. Bells on a Starry Night is in simple

\textsuperscript{140} Diemer, Thinking Back (Fort Lauderdale, FL: The FJH Music Company Inc., 2010).
ABA form, written mostly in perfect fifths. Despite its simplicity, the piece is effectively written for performance by young students, with the open sounds that mimic bells of high and low timbres. It is also a great learning piece to teach beginners on various basics, such as familiarizing different octaves by finding same chords in high and low registers, intervals (unison, second, third, fourth, and fifth,) of block chords, and note values of half note, quarter note, dotted quarter notes, and eighth notes, as well as learning different articulations, dynamics, and even pedaling.

*Sailing on a Quite Sea* is through-composed. Challenge is in counting steady eighth notes, especially approaching to and coming from m. 40, the only 3/2 bar in the piece, where the grouping of the eighth notes changes from three to four, and back to three (Example 34).

Example 34. *Sailing on a Quiet Sea*, mm. 37-41  
(Used with permission from The FJH Music Company Inc.)

*We Won the Race* consists of frequent meter changes, heavier chords, and less predictability in form. Thus, it requires a more advanced sense of beat and dynamic control, appropriate for late beginners or early intermediate level students. These two latest pieces were published in 2011 by FJH, as *Travels Though Sound*, which is a

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141 Diemer, *Sailing on a Quiet Sea* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: The FJH Music Company Inc., 2011).
republication of *Adventures in Sound* with the three additional pieces, *Bells on a Starry Night, Sailing on a Quiet Sea, and We Won the Race.*

C. Selected studies of representative concert works

a) Concert works of intermediate level difficulty:

Two of intermediate works from the composer’s early period (*Suite No.1 for Children* and *Suite No.2 for Children “At the Zoo,”* both written in 1952) are attractive and accessible additions to the concert repertoires for growing pianists. Written before the composer had participated in the YCP, these two works are different from the pedagogical works mentioned above in that they were not written with the focus of specific teaching agendas. Rather, these compositions show the early realizations of the composer’s attempts to blend traditional compositional features with the modern concepts, showing preference in neo-classic forms, neo-tonal tendency, and programmatic contents, with the intention of producing more performance-friendly solo piano pieces.

The *Suite No.1 for Children* most clearly represents the composer’s neo-classic preference in early period. The most obvious neo-classic elements in the work are the structures of the movements. The three movements, titled *Minuet, Lullaby,* and *March,* all bear clear traditional forms: the *Minuet* is in a rounded binary form, typical of the dance, the *Lullaby* in a ternary, and *March* in a theme and variation form.

However, untraditional features of structural schemes are blended into the traditional forms as well. For example, the *Minuet,* although in a seemingly conventional rounded binary, has an unconventional phrasing of the opening section in nine measures,
(versus a typical eight measure period structure, for example,) which can be interpreted as a progressive (modulating) period ending in the key of V with a perfect authentic cadence, composed of four measure of antecedent and five measures of consequent (Example 35). However, at the end of what can be conceived as an antecedent, there is no half cadence or incomplete authentic cadence as expected of a period structure. Rather, the suggested harmony is IV, before the consequent begins in iii in m. 5, ending the section with a perfect authentic cadence in the dominant key. Thus the concept of a through-composed, asymmetric melody and period structure have been blended into the classic construction, mixing the new concept with the old.

Example 35. *Suite No.1 for Children, Minuet, mm. 1-9*\(^{142}\)

Another traditional feature of the suite is the presence of clear tonal centers in all

\(^{142}\) Diemer, *Suite No.1 for Children* (Germany: Certosa Verlag, 2012); Examples 35-38 come from the same source and are used with permission from Certosa Verlag.
of the movements. The keys used in the movements are A Major, E Major, and F Major, respectively, outlined rather plainly in the beginnings of the movements. Again, however, Diemer brings a modern bend to the work, by instead of indicating the key signatures in the beginnings of the scores, she uses accidentals in all three movements to move more freely harmonically (and this feature is consistent for most of the composer’s works.) As seen in the analyses of the Examples 35, 36, & 37, soon after the openings of the movements, Diemer deviates from the conventional progressions and presents new harmonies outside the traditional tonal movements.

Example 36. *Suite No.1 for Children, Lullaby*, mm. 11-20

The fusion of the old and the new can also be found in the last movement, *March*, which is theme and variations. After the theme in F Major, the variations are weaved continuously, and they take place in different key (first and second variations are in G Major), registers, augmentation, and texture. However, in each variation, only the first seven beats of the theme are kept unaltered, demarcating new variations. After the head of the melody, however, all the variations deviate from the theme melody, presenting
variations within a variation, bringing new twist to the old theme and variation form (Examples 37 & 38).

Example 37. Suite No.1 for Children, March, mm. 1-4

Example 38. Suite No.1 for Children, March, mm. 17-20

As indicated previously, the March provides a contrasting mood with a robust character, unlike the preceding two movements which are more elegant in melodies and textures, and finishes the suite with charming buoyancy.

Suite No.2 for Children “At the Zoo” is the composer’s first programmatic solo work for intermediate level pianists. Unlike the composer’s earliest programmatic works of advanced level, which consist of abstract and general presentations of the intended subjects, in each piece of the second suite for children, the composer picks a specific trait of the featured animal that is the most relatable to young pianists, depicting the character with vivid and convincing motives. Such picturesque sound presentations reappear with
more centralized and explicit expressions in later programmatic works that are geared
toward younger pianists, such as *Adventures in Sound* and *Space Suite* as we have already
discussed.

The main idea of the first piece in the suite, *The Sad-Eyed Buffalo*, is the
undulating character in the melody throughout the movement, which seems to allude
wailing of the buffalo. The movement is a song, setting melodies on the right hand
against simple chordal and contrapuntal accompaniments in the left hand. The melody is
through-composed, giving a wavering quality to the movement, and it constantly heaves
up and down throughout the movement, painting a discontent buffalo, moaning in a sad
song (Example 39).

Example 39. *Suite No.2 for Children, “At the Zoo,” The Sad-Eyed Buffalo*,
mm. 2-6\textsuperscript{143}

![Example 39](image)

In the *March of the Bear Cubs*, the articulations of accents and staccatos set to the
dotted and off-beat rhythms paint the picture of clumsy teetering and tottering of the
cubs’ march, bring comical character throughout the movement (Example 40).

Example 40. *Suite No.2 for Children, “At the Zoo,” March of the Bear Cubs*,
mm. 2-5

\textsuperscript{143} Diemer, “Suite No.2 for Children; At the Zoo,” score, 1952, Davidson Library Department of Special
Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara; Examples 39-42 come form the same source and are
used with permission from the composer.
The Old Camel is united by the ostinato in the bass. The short-long rhythm in the left-hand chord first appears as a G-D drone, mimicking lumpy and uneven amble of a tired camel (Example 41). The movement away from G tonic and change of the ostinato rhythm to long-short rhythm take place only briefly in the middle section (Example 42). The piece ends with the return of the opening drone.

Example 41. Suite No.2 for Children, “At the Zoo,” The Old Camel, mm. 3-7

Example 42. Suite No.2 for Children, “At the Zoo,” The Old Camel, mm. 26-30

Monkey Dance is the composer’s first published work. It was published by
Yorktown Music Press, Inc. in 1985\textsuperscript{144} in Denes Agay’s \textit{Piano Encores, A New Series of Original Compositions for the Piano}. The ubiquitous presence of the frolicsome dance theme provides unity to the piece, marking structurally important places in the form. The work is best analyzed as a ternary scheme with an extensive coda.\textsuperscript{145} The middle section provides a contrast to the main dance theme, but it is actually taken from the head of the main theme, developing the repetition of the eighth notes (Examples 43 & 44).

Example 43. No. 2 for Children, “At the Zoo,” \textit{Monkey Dance}, mm. 1-2\textsuperscript{146} (© G. Schirmer, Inc. Used by permission.)

Example 44. No. 2 for Children, “At the Zoo,” \textit{Monkey Dance}, mm. 11-12 (© G. Schirmer, Inc. Used by permission.)

\textsuperscript{144} In Schlegel’s \textit{Emma Lou Diemer, A Bio-Bibliography}, the publication year is indicated as 1986, but according to the UCSB archive of the composer’s original score, the publication year is 1985.

\textsuperscript{145} Outland analyzes the piece as a loose rondo form, designating the transitional motive of the octave eighths in m. 8 as a contrasting section as well. However, the motive is not significantly played out and rather than providing a contrasting character, it functions more as a transition to the middle section, which does protract beyond a couple of measures on the eighth-note rhythm.

\textsuperscript{146} Diemer, \textit{Monkey Dance} (New York, NY: Yorktown Music Press Inc., 1986); Examples 43 & 45 come from the same source and are copyrighted by G. Schirmer Inc.
The main dance theme is brought back in Eb at the end of the middle section, trailing off in a descending scale which ends on F# abruptly into a break slashes, heralding the return of the main theme in the tonic, G. The coda is marked “faster,” recapping the main dance theme in the beginning and ending with the eighth-note theme from the middle section. Thus, the entire piece is tightly structured with the main theme and its fragmentation.

In *Monkey Dance*, Diemer uses some interesting poly-metrical and bi-tonality scheme, creating further individuality of lines and illusion of multiple monkeys dancing. In the opening two measures, the main melody is set above the three eighth note ostinato, F#-E-D. The notated meter for this section is 4/4, which the melody in the right hand abides by, but the left hand starts a beat later with the ostinato on the second beat, and its grouping of the three eighth notes followed by the eighth rest creates a feel of 2/4, misaligned by a beat against the right hand’s 4/4 grouping. Also, the melody suggests G as the center, constantly returning to G, but the ostinato suggests D as the center in the opening. Even more pronounced usage of polymeter and polytonality takes place in the last section, where the main theme returns. The ostinato changes this time to the 3/4 figuration of eighth notes in the left hand set against the 4/4 melody in the right hand, and while it is outlining G Major, the right hand shows alteration in the melody, suggesting Ab Major against the left hand G Major (Example 45).

Example 45. *Suite No. 2 for Children, “At the Zoo,” Monkey Dance*, mm. 24-25
(© G. Schirmer, Inc. Used by permission.)
b) Concert work for late intermediate/early advanced level:

*Seven Pieces for Marilyn* (or *A Little of This and That*) is a set of assorted pieces that cover various styles of modern music. Although the work was not published until 2010, it was completed in 1982, reflecting the explorative stage of the composer’s composing phase. The work is another great example that represents composer’s early eclectic tendency in her compositional method, containing elements of both the past and the current, as well as diverse contemporary sounds. However, the overall sonority of the set is much more stringent, and the themes and motives show more sophistry in structure and rhythm than the early concert works mentioned above. The set is the most challenging work among the intermediate level solo works, and is similar in its musical effect to that of *Seven Etudes*, in that it offers various distinctive characters.

Two of the pieces in the set use genres that look back to the past, namely fugue and passacaglia, but the harmonic language used in these pieces feature much chromaticism. The fugue is in two voices, and the subject outlines two layers of pronounced chromatic lines, one as C-C#-G#-G-F#, and the other as falling chromatic line from G to E (Example 46).
Similarly, the passacaglia is based on the ground bass of falling chromatic line, decorated with leaps of various quintal and quartal harmonies (perfect fifth, augmented fourth, augmented fifth, diminished fifth, diminished fourth, and perfect fourth all appear in that order.) (Example 47)

Example 47. Seven Pieces for Marilyn, A Little Passacaglia, ground bass

Also, as seen in Examples 46 and 47, both the subject of the fugue and the ground bass of the passacaglia feature asymmetric phrasing, characteristic of contemporary music. Thus, the composer fuses both old and new compositional techniques in these pieces.

In contrast to the two old forms used in the pieces mentioned above, A Little Ragtime refers to the relatively modern genre of the 20th century, rag, but with more tonal than chromatic writing. In this piece, the composer includes common features of a typical rag, such as the steady duple meter and syncopated rhythms in the melody, but also includes interesting twists that make the piece sound more like a modern jazz piece

147 Diemer, Seven Pieces for Marilyn (Germany: Certosa Verlag, 2010); Examples 46-51 come from the same source and used with permission from Certosa Verlag.
than a simple rag. For example, the meter is for the most part set at 2/2, but 3/2 extension often concludes a phrase, throwing off the expected duple grouping of a rag. Also, unlike a typical piano rag that features syncopated right hand melody over the steady left-hand oompah accompaniment, the syncopated melody and its fragments are tossed around between the hands, and there is no consistent accompaniment throughout the piece. The overall impression of the piece is an extemporaneous unraveling of the whimsical contemplation on the opening four bars, which delineates the three sections of the piece (Example 48).

Example 48. Seven Pieces for Marilyn, A Little Ragtime, mm. 1-4

A Little Imagination and A Little Drumming require prepared piano, featuring various experimental sounds from playing inside the piano. Following the Toccata and Encore, which explore such unusual sounds extensively, these pieces are the first to adventure through the extended techniques among the intermediate level solo works. Among the intermediate level works, the two pieces most strongly reflect the composer’s occupation with sound exploration and also the influence of electronic music with which the composer was actively involved at the time; accordingly, there are greater varieties of
sounds and levels of difficulty of extended techniques used in these pieces than in later works, such as *Adventures in Sound* and *Space Suite*. In both *Adventures in Sound* and *Space Suite*, the pieces that feature experimental sounds focused succinctly on one or two extended techniques throughout one short piece, as seen in *A Harp in the Sky* and *Wind in the West* (from the *Adventures in Sound*,) which feature playing over the dampened strings, or in *Space People Dancing* and *The Surface of the Moon* (from *Space Suite*,) which mostly key into on-string glissandos and tapping. In *A Little Imagination*, there are various types of on-string sounds, including glissandos, tapping (with pencil eraser, finger, fingertips, and palms,) plucking, and tremolos with different combinations of silently depressed clusters and pedals, over extended high and low registers. Nearly all the measures are marked with specific instructions for particular sound production. In *A Little Drumming*, although only featured experimental sound is playing over the dampened strings, the extensive alternation between the inside and on-the-keys playing pose extra difficulty in coordination, along with added challenge of tricky rhythm passages and frequent tempo/meter changes. Despite the description in their titles, these pieces offer big and diverse palettes of interesting sonorities and musical challenge.

*A Little Sad* and *A Little Finale* demonstrate Diemer’s typical atonal lyricism and rhythmic drive respectively, in through-composed settings. As many of the composer’s lyrical pieces are, *A Little Sad* is through-composed with asymmetric phrases. The piece has no meter marking, but there is a steady pulse of eighth note, and the bar-lines group motives that belong together, as the phrasings frequently change between different combinations of 7/8, 6/8, and 5/8 most prominently, and of 8/8 and 9/8 occasionally. The structure of the piece is defined by the ritardando at the end of each section, outlining
three distinguishable areas. *A Little Finale*, the last pieces of the set, is also through-composed with frequent meter changes throughout the piece. Written with three main motives that are varied, the form consists of several sections collaged together without transitions. The main motives bear much resemblance to parts of themes from the previous pieces in the set, suggesting circular writing. For example, traces of motives from *A Little Sad* (mm. 1-4), *A Little Ragtime* (mm. 5-6), and *A Little Drumming* (m. 1) are prominent in the main motives of *A Little Finale*, with subtle alterations (Example 49 & 50).

Example 49. *Seven Pieces for Marilyn, A Little Finale*, mm. 1-5 & mm. 31-32

Example 50. *Seven Pieces for Marilyn, A Little Sad*, mm. 1-4, *A Little Ragtime* mm. 5-6, and *A Little Drumming* m. 1
Other common compositional techniques of the composer, such as the use of dual pitch centers and extensive sequential writing, are frequently employed in both of these movements. Features such as percussive sounds, repetition of motives, and vibrant rhythmical drive that builds to a big finish, all of which are often used in the composer’s concluding pieces, reappear in *A Little Finale* as well, bringing a dramatic end to this multi-faceted set for mature intermediate level pianists or early advanced level pianists.

Published in the same year as *Seven Pieces for Maryland* is *A Waltz for Isolde*, which is of similar difficulty level but more tonal sounding. The work shows three distinct key areas of Eb major, E major, and the return of Eb major, but there are liberal uses of notes outside of the general key areas and there is no functional transition between the keys. According to the key areas, the structure of the work can be considered as tri-parte, where the last section is twice as long as the preceding two sections, because the opening section is repeated verbatim followed by an extensive
variation on the theme that finishes the waltz. Without a contrasting trio section, the entire piece is monothematic, where the second section in E major and the second half of the last key area in Eb major are variations of the opening theme. The variation in the latter mentioned segment recalls the theme more closely than in the E major section, creating an overall scheme of A (Eb major)- B (E major)- A(Eb major)- A’(Eb major) form of a simple waltz.

There are some sophisticated departures from the traditional waltz features as well. In general, a simple waltz tune consists of two repeated periods of eight bars in clear three beats of strong-weak-weak pattern per measure. However, in *Waltz for Isolde*, the two periods in the opening section are through-composed, bearing no obvious resemblance to one another. Furthermore, in the beginning of the second period (mm. 9-10), the waltz beat in triple meter is blurred by the duple grouping of the left hand, creating an illusion of meter change. The phrase extension in mm. 17-18 shows the duple interjection even more clearly (Example 51).

The piece is appropriate for performance by intermediate level pianists, with some challenging passages that would require additional pianistic effort for less advanced pianists; expansive chordal leaps in the left hand, playing in the extreme registers, and successive wide rolls are some of more challenging techniques included. With an impromptu-like melody that creates a carefree wistfulness and neo-tonal sonority that bears soothingly cheerful ambiance throughout the piece, *Waltz for Isolde* is an attractive and accessible modern concert piece for mature intermediate level pianists and up.

Example 51. *Waltz for Isolde*, mm. 1-21, (with mm. 9-10 and mm. 17-18 highlighted)
c) Concert works for advanced level (early period):

_Preludes for Piano_, written in 1945, is a set of six preludes, each with a symbolic title of impressionistic subject and trait. The first prelude, _Fog_, is based on two main
motives presented in the beginning of the piece (Example 52), both motivic in character, rather than melodic.

Example 52. **Preludes for Piano, Fog**, mm. 1-4

![Example 52. Preludes for Piano, Fog, mm. 1-4](image)

Second prelude, *Moonlight*, shows much more of the impressionistic idioms, such as chord planing, and chords in thirds (Example 53).

Example 53. **Preludes for Piano, Moonlight**, mm. 13-17

![Example 53. Preludes for Piano, Moonlight, mm. 13-17](image)

Third *West Wind*, reminisces *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest* (What the West Wind has seen) from Debussy’s *Preludes* Book I; the two preludes share the same subject, as revealed in the titles, and there are distinctively similar compositional gestures. The opening of both preludes begin with repetitive patterns that invoke imagery of whirling whispering winds,

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148 Diemer, “Preludes for Piano,” score, 1945, Davidson Library Department of Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara; Examples 52-54, 56, and 58 come from the same source and are used with permission from the composer.
where both beginning figurations are marked with PP and rumbling in the low register (Examples 54 & 55). Furthermore, Debussy’s prelude is marked Animé et tumultueux (animated and tumultuous) and Emma Lou’s marking of agitato for her prelude puts the piece along the same line of temperament. Thus, although the specific patterns are different, the atmosphere and mood settings are quite similar.

Example 54. Preludes for Piano, West Wind, m. 1

Example 55. Debussy’s Ce qu’a vu le vent d’ouest, from Preludes Book I, m. 1

The second section of this prelude is more romantic in texture and sound, showing Rachmaninoff influence in the left hand accompaniment of large arpeggiation and Gershwin influence with the use of jazz harmonies, and these qualities show up more extensively in later works as well.

149 Debussy, Preludes Book I, 1910.
150 Outland, 19.
The fourth prelude, *Anger*, opens with repeated chords pounded in *fortissimo* dynamic, which is the main motive that gets varied throughout the piece. This movement shows Bartok influence, in its primal quality in rhythmic profile and motivic gestures. A good example can be seen in the middle section, where the ostinato bass motive and chords in staccato and jumps across registers in the right hand recall the second dance from the Romanian Dance Op.8a (Examples 56 & 57).

Example 56. *Preludes for Piano, Anger*, mm. 20-22

![Example 56](image1)

Example 57. Bartok’s *Two Romanian Folk Dances* op. 8a, No.2 mm. 1-4

![Example 57](image2)

The movement also shows the composer’s earliest attempt at fusing the twentieth century idioms with neo-classic elements such as the use of da capo ternary form and imitative counterpoints set to jazzy motive (Example 58).

Example 58. *Preludes for Piano, Anger*, mm. 5-6

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151 Bella Bartok, *Two Romanian Folk Dances* op. 8a, 1910.
The following two preludes *Sorrow* and *Nostalgia* also demonstrate more of the fusion of traditional concepts and non-tonal language, such as quartal and quintal harmonies.

Overall, the *Preludes for Piano* is both a good example that reveals some of the main influences on Emma Lou, who was a burgeoning composer at the time of the composition, and a preview of the composer’s penchant in certain styles, which would solidify and flourish in her later works.

*Suite No.1: Landscapes* from 1947 is another work with stronger programmatic contents, the first work containing direct literary reference. Each title of the movements in the suite comes from the opening lines and main images depicted in the poems from *Landscapes* written 1933-1934, by T.S. Eliot. All poems in *Landscapes* are used except for Poem IV, *Rannoh, near Glenckow*. Below is the text of the entire *Landscapes*, and some of the lines or concepts used in the titles and prominent in the composition are underlined.

*Landscapes*, T.S. Eliot

I. New Hampshire
*Children's voices in the orchard*
Between the blossom- and the fruit-time:
Golden head, crimson head,
Between the green tip and the root.
Black wing, brown wing, hover over;
Twenty years and the spring is over;
To-day grieves and to-morrow grieves,
Cover me over, light-in-leaves;
Golden head, black wing,
Cling, swing,
Spring, sing,
Swing up into the apple-tree.

II. Virginia
Red river, red river,
Slow flow, heat is silence
No will is still as a river
Still. Will heat move
Only through the mocking-bird
Heard once? Still hills
Wait. Gates wait. Purple trees,
White trees, wait, wait,
Delay, decay. Living, living,
Never moving. Ever moving
Iron thoughts came with me
And go with me:
Red river river river.

III. Usk
Do not suddenly break the branch, or
Hope to find
The white hart over the white well.
Glance aside, not for lance, do not spell
Old enchantments. Let them sleep.
'Gently dip, but not too deep',
Lift your eyes
Where the roads dip and where the roads rise
Seek only there
Where the grey light meets the green air
The Hermit's chapel, the pilgrim's prayer.

IV. Rannoh, near Glenckow
Here the crow starves, here the patient stag
Breeds for the rifle. Between the soft moor
and the soft sky, scarcely room
To leap or to soar. Substance crumbles, in the thin air
Moon cold or moon hot. The road winds in
Littleness of ancient war,
Langour of broken steel,
Clamour of confused wrong, apt
In silence. Memory is strong
Beyond the bone. Pride snapped,  
Shadow of pride is long, in the long pass  
No concurrence of bone.

V. Cape Ann  
O quick quick quick, quick hear the song sparrow,  
Swamp sparrow, fox-sparrow, vesper sparrow  
At dawn and dusk. Follow the dance  
Of goldenfinch at noon. Leave to chance  
The Blackburnian wabler, the shy one. Hail  
With shrill whistle the note of the quail, the bob-white  
Dodging the bay-bush. Follow the feet  
Of the walker, the water-thrush. Follow the flight  
Of the dancing arrow, the purple martin. Greet  
In silence the bullbat. All are delectable. Sweet sweet sweet  
But resign this land at the end, resign it  
To its true owner, the tough one, the sea gull.  
The palaver is finished.

In each movement, the composer tries to include the poems’ sounds or images of nature, corresponding to the titles. Overall, she uses dissonant musical language, but set in thin textures and using middle to high registers. The resulting moods are very abstract and austere, while keeping subtle nostalgia and bitter-sweet disposition of the poems’ contents. The fourth poem might have been left out, as it deals with the subject of war, appearing darkest among the poems, and not consistent with the depiction of nature scenes on which the composer focused.

For example, the first movement, *Children of the Orchard*, corresponds to the first line of the poem *New Hampshire*, as Diemer repaints the colorful words of the poem in brilliant but stringent timbres. The composer keys into three sonority and nature depictions from the poem, “Cling, swing, /Spring, sing, /Swing up into the apple-tree.” Immediately from the opening, a playful mood is set by the swinging gesture between the right hand and left hand on the high registers, mimicking the clinging sound and
swinging gesture of the children as they weave through the apple trees (Example 59).

Example 59. Suite No.1, Children in the Orchard, mm. 1-4

![Musical notation]

The right hand quartal harmonies (E#, B, E, and E, A, D, bottom to top of the first and second groups) are juxtaposed with the left hand mostly quintal sonorities (F# and C#, and D# and A#, the outer notes of the first and second chords,) set apart chromatically (E, E#, F#, the outer notes of the first right and left hand groups, and D, E, D#, the outer notes of the second right and left hand groups,) resulting in a subtle balance of open but stringent sound.

Second idea starts from m. 9, and when it reappears in m. 14, it seems to depict the singing of the children, as the texture changes to more lyrical legato, but also within dissonant chords, all in seconds, both vertically and horizontally from measure to measure (Example 60).

Example 60. Suite No.1, Children in the Orchard, mm. 9-12 and mm. 14-16

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152 Diemer, “Suite No.1: Landscape,” score, 1947, Davidson Library Department of Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara; Examples 59-62 come from the same source and are used with permission from the composer.
Third idea is presented in mm.13-14 and it seems to mimic bird sounds mentioned in the poem, and again, the right hand figurations move in major and minor seconds, as do the left hand sequences (top notes of the sequences move B-A#-G#, middle notes D#-C#-B, and bottom notes C#-B-A) (Example 61).

Example 61. Suite No.1, Children in the Orchard, mm. 13-14

More of specific images of nature are depicted in other movements; the second movement *Red River* is set to slow, static scalar motives in both hands, portraying the “slow flow” and stillness of the river, metaphoric of death alluded in the poem. The opening of the third movement *Usk* word paints the line “Gently dip, but not too deep,” with falling scalar and arpeggiated motives that are fragmented and rhythmically varied.
throughout the movement, giving calmly explorative and wandering character
corresponding to the poem’s references of searching, journey, and prayer on the roads of
the English town Usk. Last piece of the set, Bird, is the busiest and most fragmented of
all movements, painting various bird calls mentioned in the last poem Cape Ann, in a
tight collage of assorted sounds. The opening page alone shows many of Diemer’s
trademark gestures in 20th-century idioms, such as extensive ostinatos or repetition of
figures, trill pedal tones, extreme syncopations, and tone clusters, each of them
mimicking different bird calls (Example 62).

Example 62. Suite No.1, Birds, Opening
Suite No.1, Landscapes is reflective of the composer’s training years and formative stage in much of its expressivity, as its musical language seems to be consciously discordant at times, lacking the effortless and extemporaneous sound and lucidity that her later works bear. Nevertheless, it reveals some of the composer’s lifelong affinity to particular compositional features, such as bright and open timbre, repetitive gestures and ostinatos, lively rhythms, and intense rhythmic energy, among
many others, while showing the sense and ability of the composer’s musical transformations of images and atmospheres from literary sources to sounds.

Suite No.2 for Piano from 1948 reflects much occupation with neo-classic forms. The first movement, Prelude, starts with a 2-measure ostinato-like figuration in the left hand, which is ubiquitous throughout the movement. There is much contrapuntal writing, alluding to a 3-voice structure, weaved around the continuous eighth note motive presented in the beginning. The Fugue is in three voice also; the subject enters on Bb and the answer follows on F as a real answer, followed by another subject entry on Bb, showing schematic adherence to the tradition of fugal entrance formula of I-V-I, although there is no clear tonal establishment in the beginning. Other common fugal concepts are used throughout, such as the first middle entry in a diminution, starting a stretto, and gradually the pitch center is alluded by the repeated later entries of the subject on Bb (Example 63 & 64).

Example 63. Suite No.2, Prelude, mm. 1-4

Example 64. Suite No.2, Fugue, mm. 1-4

Diemer, “Suite No.2,” score, 1948, Davidson Library Department of Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara; Examples 63 & 65 come form the same source and are used with permission from the composer.
As mentioned earlier, Toccata in Suite No.2 uses a multi-sectional scheme, recalling the Baroque toccata structure, but it is set within a continuous quasi-fantasy form reminiscent of Mozart’s Fantasia, K. 475 in C minor. Just like Mozart’s Fantasia, there are five distinctive but continuous sections, and the second section is marked “quasi-cadenza,” which is followed by a recitative-like section and the third section, marked “Slower, expressivo,” before the return of the two fast sections. However, the overall form is much more truncated and fast-pace than Mozart’s K. 475, and there is no fugal or contrapuntal section typically found in Baroque toccatas. Rather, the most prominent feature of Diemer’s Toccata is the motto perpetuo texture of flashy finger works and percussive use of the instrument, common in the twentieth century toccatas, (such as toccatas by Ravel, Prokofiev, and Bowen among many others) which focus more on the literal definition of the title, “to touch.” To this fusion of Baroque, classical, and modern practices found in the form and the texture of the movement, a romantic feature is added also, as the slow middle section presents a lush romantic melody above wide range arpeggio accompaniment in cross rhythms at times, setting three against four and vice versa (Example 65).

Example 65. Suite No.2, Toccata, mm. 65-66
Covering the whole spectrum of different eras, the movement is another good early example of Emma Lou’s eclectic tendency and interest in combining concepts of the past and the present in her composition.

d) Concert works: advanced level (middle period):

The advanced level works from this period differs from those of the early period in that they show more contrasting characterizations and dramatic writing that build to grasping finish within a work. *Seven Etudes* is the first advanced level solo work from the middle period that looks back at advanced piano writings of virtuosity and panache, and it is a good example that demonstrates such difference from the earlier advanced level solo works. Unlike the earlier works, *Seven Etudes* reaches out more readily to broader public and with greater general appeal to the modern sounds, when her earlier advanced level solo piano works remain unnoticed.\footnote{For example, some of her earliest advanced level piano solo works, such as *Preludes* and *Suite No.1*, which are comparable advanced level works consisting of several movements, have overall musical atmospheres that are abstract, reflective, and tranquil, without a lot of obvious spectacles or active dramas in the sound. Even with the fast tempi in movements such as *Fog* and *West Wind* from the *Preludes*, or *Birds* from the first suite, the ubiquitous ostinatos and quiet dynamics often create still illusion. In the *Preludes*, stronger contrasts were seemingly attempted with movements on emotional themes (Anger, Sorrow, and Nostalgia) following the objective themes (*Fog*, *Moonlight*, and *West Wind*) but the brief tension of Anger movement is quickly resolved in the following last two slow, contemplative movements, with the return of introspective quality that finishes the set. Consequently, the *Preludes*, as a set, has overall motionless or slow-moving impression, where abstract expressions and pensive atmosphere abound; and}
Individual etudes in *Seven Etudes* carry more variety of distinctive sounds and moods, where there is a pacing of dramatization that builds to a finish that is striking to the ear. In the composer’s notes to *Seven Etudes*, Diemer reveals that each etude was “a study in articulation and mood,”¹⁵⁵ and that her goal was to “produce a set of contrasting pieces that would be ‘showy’ and explore the range of the piano.”¹⁵⁶ Such intentions were well executed in the work.

The etudes in the set alternate between fast and slow tempi, with the fast tempi on the outer movements. From the beginning of the opening movement, a short, energetic motive in *fortissimo* claims and reclaims the attention of the listeners throughout the movement with its presence demarcating different sections (Example 66).

Example 66. *Seven Etudes, Etude No.1*, mm. 1-2¹⁵⁷

Contrasting the parade of vigorous pace and frequently changing meter in the first etude, the second etude follows with calm ambling of constant quarter notes set within the

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¹⁵⁵ Schlegel, 107.
¹⁵⁷ Diemer, *Seven Etudes* (New York, NY: Carl Fischer Music Inc., 1965); Examples 66 & 68 come from the same source and are used with permission from Carl Fischer Music Inc.
unchanging meter 4/4. Along with the second etude’s diametric tempo and rhythmic profile, the velvety texture and gentle sonority of the second etude also provide soothing relief from the rough bustling of the first. The fast tempo returns with the third etude, but with even more of hyperactivity that is of different character from the previous fast etude, and with an extreme tempo of quarter note equaling 208. The dominating meter is 3/4, creating a scherzo-like feel of one big beat subdivided into three smaller beats, and the presence of constantly running eighth notes marked ‘detached,’ set to the prevailing soft dynamic, further contributes to the playful characteristic of the scherzo. The fourth etude is a study of playing various tremolos, where tremolo texture is kept throughout the piece. Slow motion returns in this etude, contrasting the scurrying activity of the previous etude. The ubiquitous PP dynamics presents much challenge of controlling the tremolos to sound even and shimmery, while balancing the other layers of voices. The following two etudes are homage, where the fifth etude, the shortest and the easiest of the set, carries an intermezzo-like impression with its quick, pointillistic atonal parody of the Second Viennese School composers, and the sixth etude provides contrast with lush texture of the sweeping left hand arpeggio and expansive melody quintessential of Rachmaninoff’s slow preludes. The last movement, written as “a very happy, bustling kind of music,” is a summation of all the fast etudes, consisting of heavy chordal passages reminiscent of first etude, motto perpetuo texture of the third etude, and the playful character of the fifth etude. The Seven Etudes as a set, takes listeners through a journey of continuously changing characters and sounds in the first six etudes, and with the last etude, concludes the experience with a crowd-pleasing big finish.

158 Johns, 71.
As described above, *Seven Etudes* comes across as a set of character pieces of assorted styles, well contrasted from each other, and despite its abundance of the modern, unconventional harmonic language, the work successfully reaches out to all listeners through its vivid musical contents. More specifically, modern sounds of atonal and chromatic harmonies are carried through different dynamic combinations of energetic rhythms and riveting articulations in fast numbers, and colorful texture and mature lyricism in slow etudes, providing relatable grounds for listeners. For example, the fifth etude, although written with homage to Schoenberg, does not use serial or twelve-tone method in expressionistic, serious mood, for which Schoenberg is most well known; rather, Diemer “wanted to have a spoof”\(^{159}\) on Schoenberg’s style, and thus the etude, while atonally written with pointillism in mind, holds comic and lighthearted character in witty rhythms and frequent dynamic contrasts (Example 67).

Example 67. *Seven Etudes, Etude No.5*, mm. 1-2

![Example 67](image)

Such characterization through the interesting juxtapositions of rhythms and dynamics connects with the general audience, despite the foreign musical language through which the expression comes. Likewise, in slow etudes such as the sixth one, (the homage to Rachmoninoff), familiar elements such as lushness and romanticism are found in the texture and melodic lines, while the harmonic language is unfamiliar (Example 68).

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\(^{159}\) Johns, 71,
In short, clear musical characters are instantly graspable by ears, in spite of the foreign sound of twentieth-century harmonic language.

*Seven Etudes* also clearly demonstrates the influence of Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and Bartok in the composer’s compositional styles and techniques. Exploiting the full range of the piano, employing driving/rhythmic energy, motivic development, ostinati, and shifting accents that characterize much of her music are features that she readily credits the composers mentioned above. She adds that in particular, Prokofiev’s “use of shifting tonalities, rich sonorities, imaginative use of registers, and heroic melodies” make their appearance in her *Seven Etudes for Piano* as well, and that she has “always liked Prokofiev’s music, especially the way he writes for piano, as in the *Third Piano Concerto.*”

From the composer’s middle period, *Toccata* is the most famous work of the composer. It not only contains the dramatic writing discussed in *Seven Etudes*, but also epitomizes the composer’s penchant for rhythmic and percussive writing through repeated motives. According to the composer, the element of repetition reflects several different musical influences, ranging from J. S. Bach to modern composers; Bach’s method of *fortspinnung stile* of motivic development, as well as Scarlatti’s idiomatic

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160 Schlegel, 7-8.
repetitive patterns occupy throughout the work. The opening repeated motives bear much similarity to the repeated motive theme in Khachaturian’s *Toccata*, and the composer recounts of her encounter with Khachaturian’s *Toccata* at age 15, which had left a great impression on her (Example 69).

Example 69. Diemer’s *Toccata*, opening & Khachaturian’s *Toccata*, mm. 41-43

In the meantime, the influence of electronic music can also be seen in the progression of music via repeated pulse and not with metric structure. The passages that require playing over the dampened strings produce electronic sound as well, and the extensive repetition of a motive in this section alludes to the style of minimalism. The composer takes the Baroque genre toccata and creates a modern flavor through the simple concept of repetition, applied in various traditional and modern ways.

161 Outland, 9.
162 Johns, 67.
163 Diemer, *Toccata* (Studio City, CA: Empire Publishing Service, 1979); used with permission from Empire Publishing Service.
165 Outland, 10.
166 Johns, 74.
Even the definition of toccata, “to touch,” is extended from its original usage, where the touch includes not only the keyboard but also inside the piano, onto the strings. The variety of “articulations” on the strings, such as sounds begotten by dampening, hitting, scraping, overtone effect set to various dynamics open up another array of touches and timbres in addition to those available on the keys. By means of exciting rhythm and percussive effects, the piece engages the listeners with its fresh techniques and sounds. In a review of performance of *Toccata* by Brazilian performer Derison Duarte, the music critic Charles Staff writes, “The devices in *Toccata* go back to Henry Cowell, but Diemer uses them with excellent effect.”\(^\text{167}\) The piece earned much more similar praises from the public and the academia; among many others, the work is described as “delightfully different from many toccatas,” \(^\text{168}\) and that it includes “fashionable academic tricks, bound together with a driving rhythm and infused with a real musical personality.”\(^\text{169}\)

f) Advanced Level Concert Works (late period)

*Fantasy* from 1993 is a good example of the composer’s neo-romantic writing in a large-scale composition. It is in one movement with several contrasting sections that are to be played “with much freedom and dramatic contrast,”\(^\text{170}\) giving the work an extensive journey through alternating intensity and release that build to a climactic ending. A review of *Fantasy for Piano* in *American Record Guide* by Jack Sullivan reads,


“Diemer’s *Fantasy* ends with an aggressive, crunching, repeated dissonance, as if to rudely remind us that the 19th century is long over---a neo-romantic “fantasy” indeed---and that we are in the last groans and crashes of the 20th.”\(^{171}\) The neo-romantic character is carried through capricious and rubato-filled writing in various 20th-century idioms, such as dissonant and discordant language with rich chromatic writing, asymmetric phrases within frequently changing meters, and even mild aleatoric writing, where the executions will vary from time to time.

Among the contemporary compositional methods used, however, the most notable are the inclusion of tone row and rhythmic series in the structural scheme, which provides a contrasting character of rigidity against the freer, improvisatory writing of fantastic disposition that the piece portrays overall. In the program notes preceding the music, the composer draws attention to these very features in the composition. The composer states that the tone row is applied for the “purpose of disruption and contrast” and that the rhythmic series is employed for “rhythmic flexibility.”\(^{172}\) In other words, these compositional methods are intended as frameworks that guide the compositional process in certain parts of the work, providing distinctively structured sections to contrast and balance the impassioned and volatile sections of the work. For example, the first time the rhythmic series appears is in the third section, where the right hand plays chords on the black keys above a 3-octave arpeggiation of F major 7th chord in the left hand. The texture in this section is homophonic, moving by the rhythmic series that the composer spells out in the program note (Example 70).


\(^{172}\) Diemer, *Fantasy*, program notes.
Example 70. *Fantasy*, rhythmic series & mm. 61-66\(^{173}\)

3-3-2 | 2-3-3 | 2-2-3 | 2-3-3 | 2-3-2 | 3-2-2

This section provides a stark contrast of regularity to the preceding two sections, which move via constantly changing meters and irregular phrases that go through several tempo changes. Likewise, the tone row’s first appearance signals the end of the slow section, which fluctuates frequently between various tempi; the tone row is stated three times in the left hand, each time getting louder, to herald back the playful section of rhythmic series, which towards its end, employs the tone row in the left hand again (Example 71).

Example 71. *Fantasy*, m. 165, mm. 230-233

\(^{173}\) Diemer, *Fantasy*; Examples 70-73 come from the same source and are used with permission from Colla Voce Music Inc.
In the context of the surrounding sections, which progress much more extemporaneously in movement and sound, these sections of controlled rhythm and note selections bring distinctive divergence of firmness to the freely flowing *Fantasy*.

In addition to such contrast of more structured writing, the sections with the serial technique also provide more consonant and simpler sonority, as opposed to the overall prevalence of dissonant harmonic language of the piece. The third section mentioned above contains mostly quartal harmonies in the right hand against major seventh chord arpeggations in the left hand in the first part of the section, offering more open sonority than before. In the second part of the same section, the passage of inverted tertian chords also give less jarring harmonies, compared to those of other sections (Example 72).

Example 72. *Fantasy*, mm. 78-79

In these ways, the inclusion of the sections that use the method of tone row and rhythmic series provides a needed contrast of orderly movement and sound within the work that
employs much loose and wild writing, which, when protracted for too long, could be difficult to follow aurally.

The work is one of the most difficult compositions that the composer had written for advanced level solo piano repertoire. It not only requires a virtuosic technique and stamina to effectively perform the work, but also mature musicianship to decipher the contrasting characters of the varying sections, understand the flow of changing tempi, and pace the progression of music without losing the momentum throughout the contrasting sections. Selected as one of the representative works of the composer by the composer herself, *Fantasy* is an effective performance piece for advanced level pianists, who would appreciate neo-romantic work that offers accessible 20th-century atonality.

*Sonata No.3* is the work that best demonstrates the composer’s eclectic tendency in the advanced solo piano repertoire. Written in three movements that bear individual titles, various sounds, structures, and styles, the work reflects traditional influences as well as modern expressions, where in the last category, further assortment of styles, such as jazz, minimalism, electronic music, Latin-American dance music, and experimentalism, can be found. The work also embraces most tonal writing among her three sonatas, but colorful twists in the chord structures and progressions make the work unmistakably modern sounding as well. Gaining notice and popularity among pianists, *Sonata No.3* holds “the most colorful pianistic writing among the three sonatas.”

The composer’s tendency to fuse several concepts is well-signaled from the ambivalent title of the first movement. The first movement *Serenade/Toccata* was written at the request of pianist and pedagogue Carol Dvoran-Lancaster, who had asked

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174 Lin, 33.
for a work that is “colorful, rhythmic, expressive, and not too discordant.” The twofold title reflects the features requested above; the piece starts out as a serenade of a lyrical theme, but its rhythmic structure of 3+3+2 eventually overshadows the lyricism, and the piece ends as a toccata of constant eighth note in motion. Thus, throughout the piece, the composer mingles the features of both lyrical serenade and motto perpetuo toccata, turning a gently rhythmic song presented in the beginning of the movement into an exciting and aggressive finger work (Example 73).

Example 73. Piano Sonata No.3, Serenade/Toccata, mm.1-4 & mm. 232-234

The eclectic penchant in the composer’s compositional process extends beyond the stylistic fusion of genres to include several different modern sounds throughout the work. In Serenade/Toccata, there are various passages that mimic the computerized sound of electronic music, hypnotic sonority of new age music, and repetitive gesture of minimalism (Example 74).

175 Ibid.
176 Diemer, Piano Sonata No.3 (Mount Airy, PA: Hildegard Publishing Company, 2001); Examples 73-84 come from the same source and are used with permission from Carl Fischer Music Inc., who holds the copyright.
Example 74. *Piano Sonata No.3, Serenade/Toccata*, mm. 30-33, mm. 119-123, & mm. 145-148

Along with the jazzy rhythms employed in the first two movements, (found in much use of syncopation in the first and blues-like rhythm of triplet subdivisions in the second), the sonority from *Interlude*’s bell motive, which are structured in open voicing with added 9ths and 13ths, is reminiscent of Copland’s popular American ballet music, such as *Appalachian Spring* (Example 75).

Example 75. *Piano Sonata No.3, Interlude*, mm. 11-13
The third movement adds to the collection of contemporary sound, most notably the fusion of Latin American dance music and experimental music. The opening theme combines chordal motive on tango rhythm with 3+3+2 rhythm pattern from the first movement, and the second theme is built above the *habanera* (Example 76).

Example 76. *Piano Sonata No.3, Tango Fantastique*, mm. 1-2 & mm. 69-70

The section that employs playing over dampened strings creates the sound of electronic guitar, interjected as interludes to three different sections of lyrical writings: chordal passage of imitation, romantic variation of the second theme, and a low voice recitative (Example 77).

Example 77. *Piano Sonata No.3, Tango Fantastique*, mm. 160-165, mm. 192-196, & mm. 223-227
Even the form of the first movement can be interpreted in several ways. There are six main sections including a coda, clearly distinguished by the composer by double lines, as described in the table below:
Table 3. Six sections of *Serenade/Toccata* as outlined by the composer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>1-107</td>
<td>108-188</td>
<td>189-232</td>
<td>233-282</td>
<td>283-342</td>
<td>343-end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Exposition</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Recapitulation</td>
<td>Coda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the table above, the piece can loosely fit into sonata-allegro mold; after the opening theme section, an energetic section of transitory character (mm. 80-132) takes place, bringing the second section that provides a clear contrast to the first. The 3+3+2 rhythm in the first section breaks off into a 2/4 meter, and a new texture of romantic melody and constant 16th-note accompaniment in the left hand take over. The third and fourth sections develop the theme extensively, before the fifth section brings the recapitulation of the first section with minimal changes. The piece ends with a coda section that builds to a dramatic finish on upward glissando across the entire keyboard.

The contrasting character of the second section, developmental character of third and fourth sections, and the almost verbatim recapitulation of the first section in the fifth section support the formal analysis of the piece as the sonata-allegro.

However, there are features that weaken the view of sonata-allegro structure for the piece, such as the lack of closing section in the exposition and re-transition into the recapitulation, as well as the absence of the second theme in the recapitulation or in the development as a means of structural balance to the exposition. Furthermore, the work is largely spun out of the first theme, and even the second theme, although distinctive in the texture and rhythm, bears resemblance to the first theme in its scalar movement (Example 78).
Example 78. Piano Sonata No.3, Serenade/Toccata, opening theme & second theme

Taking these traits into consideration, the work can then be viewed as a monothematic, through-composed work in six sections, or a loose theme and variation on the opening material. All three views of the structure of the first movement carry validity, and this flexible form can be considered to be intentional, as the title of the work, Serenade/Toccata, alludes to such flexibility.¹⁷⁷

Sonata No.3 is also the work that shows the most musical cohesion and thematic unity between the movements. Some of Diemer’s prior works to the last sonata included programmatic unity within a suite work, such as Suite No.1: Landscapes, and Suite No.2 for Children “At the Zoo,” but there were no obvious or direct sharing of musical

¹⁷⁷ Similar ambivalence of structural interpretation is existent in other movements as well. Interlude can be seen as a sectional composition of five different key areas or as a ternary form, based on the dramatic build-up of the middle section and the clear return of the opening materials in the last section. Tango Fantastique offers several different motives in four broad sections and a coda, where the distinctive contrast between the tango opening and the habanera section, and the existence of the recapitulation alludes to the sonata-allegro form; but the recapitulation switches the order of the themes from the exposition, deviating from the expected form, and the middle section, which includes the experimental passages, offers a lyrical contrast to the outer sections, rather than carrying a developmental character. Also, just as in the first movement, there is no recapitulation of the second theme.
materials across the movements within a work. From the middle period on, in works such as *Seven Etudes* and *Seven Pieces for Marilyn*, the finale movements consists of subtle inclusions of musical references from previous movements in the suite. In *Sonata No.3*, however, the main themes of the movements share closer similarities, where the themes of successive movements seem to grow out of the previous movements’ materials.

Such organic writing across the movements is first seen in the beginning of the Interlude, where the loud bell-like chords echo the ending of the first movement (Example 79).

Example 79. *Piano Sonata No.3, Serenade/Toccata* last measure & *Interlude*, mm. 1-3

![Example 79](image)

In an interview with Pamela Sue Haynes, who had written her dissertation on the composer’s works, Diemer comments on the opening of *Interlude* as follows:

I played particularly the ending of *Serenade/Toccata* and suddenly found
myself playing a beginning for Interlude: a rather percussive sounding of a chord also in A.  

The movement continues with a repeated note motive, which also echoes the theme of the first movement in its rhythmic structure of 3+3+2, albeit the last duple grouping is stretched out in value. The same rhythmic grouping resonates frequently in Tango Fantastique as well (Example 80).

Example 80. Piano Sonata No.3, Tango Fantastique, mm. 15-17 & mm. 52-54

Just as the theme of second movement grew out of the theme of the first movement, the two main themes of the third movement strongly resonate fragments of the repeated note theme in the second movement, stated in m.3 of Interlude. The opening theme of Tango Fantastique contains repeated chords in tango rhythm, reminiscing the repeated note theme of Interlude, and the gesture of repetition recurs abundantly.

throughout the movement. The second theme of *Tango Fantastique* consists of a simple two-note motive, moving in upward whole step, which recalls the tail portion of the opening theme from *Interlude*. *Interlude* also ends with this upward step motive, and thus the relation between the two movements appears even more convincing, when the motive is heard again in *Tango Fantastique* (Example 81).

Example 81. *Piano Sonata No.3, Tango Fantastique*, mm. 1-2, mm. 69-71, & *Interlude*, mm. 71-73

Thus, even though the three movements show completely different characteristics—partly because they were composed at different times and were put together later as a
sonata—they work together persuasively as a sonata, united in their main musical themes that share common features.

Lastly, with regards to the overall sonority of the piece, throughout the work, there is a balanced movement of adherence to and freedom from tonal writing. The sonata employs the tonal movement of V-I progression at various places, although such functional harmonic progressions are frequently blurred by subtle alterations of notes. For example, in the exposition of the first movement, a clear dominant-tonic relationship takes place in mm. 10-11, where a brief meter change of 3/8 in D7 brings back the opening theme in G (Example 82).

Example 82. Piano Sonata No.3, Serenade/Toccata, mm. 10-11

![Example 82](image)

When similar return of the theme occurs later in the exposition, the dominant is altered, where the bass no longer holds the D but a Db moving down to G in tritone interval (Example 83).

Example 83. Piano Sonata No.3, Serenade/Toccata, mm. 67-68

![Example 83](image)
Similarly in *Interlude*, the ostinato in the bass repeats the I-V-I motion in the sections of chodal planing, first heard in mm. 11-18. The section is in G according to the bass movement, but the interjected chord of Db major in second inversion adds an awry angle to the dominant-tonic movement (Example 84).

Example 84. *Piano Sonata No.3, Interlude*, mm. 11-12

![Example 84](image)

Aside from the tonic-dominant relationship, overall sonority of the sonata is more consonant than dissonant, and while it is clearly modern in compositional styles and sounds, such features are rendered in aurally pleasing and accessible sonority to which the listeners can relate. The third sonata is an effective and attractive piece that represents the composer’s style, sound, and philosophy for advanced pianists and a broader audience, who appreciates eclectic modern music.

*Psalms for Piano* is the last and the longest sacred work of the composer for advanced solo piano. Consisting of eighteen individual movements that can be performed in various orders and combination, the work offers an extensive overview of the composer’s compositional inclinations towards particular modern sounds and technique. Among the composer’s advanced level solo piano repertoire, *Psalms for Piano* is the only work that contains a large number of miniature movements, where various moods and sounds are offered in concise musical motives in individual pieces.
Compared to other advanced level solo piano works, there is much more homogenous writing in this work, where a particular gesture or idea permeates through a movement in concise and clear forms with much more concentration of the featured motive. However, despite the variety offered in multi-movement structure, consistent with the composer’s later works, such as *Three Pieces for Piano* and *Sonata No.3*, there is more cohesive writing between several movements, where certain movements are connected by thematic similarities.

The last movement, XVIII, is the clearest example in the set that demonstrates such thematic connection. The movement is the most elaborate in the set, giving a finale-like conclusion to the work. The entire movement is structured as a collage of themes and motives from ten previous movements, I, III, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, XII, XV, and XVII, where some themes were recapped verbatim, and some themes were emulated in their motives or gestures. For example, the beginning of the movement restates the opening eight bars of XV, note for note, and the ending of the movement pastes the ending four measures of IX, with a slight difference of octave displacement in the right hand (Example 85).

Example 85. *Psalms for Piano*, XV and XVIII opening 8 measures & *Psalms for Piano*, IX and XVIII ending 4 measures

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179 Diemer, *Psalms for Piano* (Frostburg, MD: Dixon-Broyles Productions, 2005); Examples 85-91 come from the same source and are used with permission from Dixon-Broyles Productions.
An example of non-verbatim recalling of the previous themes occurs in mm. 31-38, where themes from movements III and IX appear in varied forms (Example 86).

Example 86. *Psalms for Piano*, III, mm. 1-4; IX, mm. 1-2; and XVIII, mm. 31-38
Diemer weaves all of these previous themes into a coherent medley, where varying themes are juxtaposed via common tones, or altered slightly at ends to accommodate connection with little or no transition (Example 87 & 88).
Example 87. *Psalms for Piano*. XVIII, mm. 110-115; IX, mm. 1-2; and XII, mm. 27-29
Example 88. *Psalms for Piano*, XVIII, mm. 15-20; XV, mm. 19-20; and III, mm. 28-31

The collage of Movement XVIII serves as a miniature summary of the composer’s favorite modern techniques and sounds in the fast movements, such as chord planing in Movement III, extreme syncopation and ostinato in Movement VI, asymmetric phrases, repetition of motives, percussive sound, and improvisation on black keys in Movement IX, among many others.

To this collage, the well-known hymn tune, *Lobe den Herren* (Praise to the Lord) is incorporated in the middle section of the movement. The composer puts the focal point of the movement in the tune, as for the conclusive message of the quoted Psalm verses for the movement reads, “Praise the Lord!”180 Among the collage of previous themes, the

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180 The movement quotes Psalm 30:5, 125:2, 87:3, and 115:18 which reads: “For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.”
hymn tune inevitably sticks out, as it is not only a familiar tune but also the only new and
distinctive melody in the movement. The recalled themes from various previous
movements are more motivic than melodic, and there is no strong connection from one to
another. In the patchwork of these various themes, the hymn tune is stated three times,
accompanied by three different motives from previous movements, and its repetition
among varying motives provides tangible thread of unity to the movement (Examples 89, 90, & 91).

Example 89. *Psalms for Piano*, XVIII, mm. 53-56 and III, mm. 1-2

Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah! We will bless the Lord from this time forth and
for evermore. Praise the Lord!”
Hence, the tune functions not only to reflect the message of the Psalm verse but also to hold the collage together as the common element and central melody among the motley background of recalled motives.
Though not quoted in the finale movement, several other features of the composer’s frequently used modern sounds and techniques—such as abundant use of ostinato (I), free tonal writing (II, IV), polytonality (V), experimentalism (XVI, XVII), and lyricism based on through-composed, improvisatory phrase work (VII)—also take place in various other movements. With the multi-movement scheme of various short pieces that offer diverse characters, *Psalms for Piano* brings to mind works, such as Robert Schumann’s *Carnival*, Op.9, which offers similar scope and arrangement. Unlike *Carnival*, which is intended to be performed in its entirety, however, *Psalms for Piano* offers diverse performance options, where different sets of selections may be rendered for various musical effects. A great representative work of the composer, *Psalms for Piano* is also a substantial contribution to the contemporary solo piano literature, in that it adds to the scarce collection of contemporary sacred solo piano repertoire that is intended for concert halls as well as sanctuary halls.

D. Comparison and summary of the two different types of works

As discussed thus far in the survey of selected representative works, both pedagogical and concert works of Diemer’s solo piano repertoire demonstrate the composer’s eclectic approach that includes various elements of both past and current music. More importantly, the principle of inclusiveness also embraces features of both high and popular elements for practical and other diverse purposes. Diemer’s use of the avant-garde techniques, such as 12-tone method and experimentalism, is not limited to

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181 Schumann’s *Carnival* consists of twenty short pieces that portray assorted characters, including the composer himself, his friends, and beloved, and figures from *Commedia dell’arte*. 

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advanced level pianists only but extended to pedagogical pieces as well as lower-level concert repertoire (*Space Suite*, for example). Likewise, she includes popular genres and sounds in advanced level concert music (such as *Piano Sonata No. 3*) as well as in less challenging sets of compositions that are intended for students and amateur pianists. Furthermore, in all of her choices of methods, styles, and sounds, Diemer’s main focus lies in communicating musical expressions to the student, performer, and audience, stressing “avoidance of undue complexity and tedious erudition.” Accordingly, one of the most important connection between her pedagogical and concert pieces is to make 20th-century musical idioms accessible and enjoyable for all those involved in the music making—the students of all levels, teachers, performers, and audiences.

More specifically, her pedagogical works focus more on the broadening of artistic scope by exploring new timbre and atmosphere, rather than physical aspects of piano performance. While there are traditional pedagogical materials for the young students on strengthening the apparatuses for movement, (fingers, hands, arms, etc..) such as Beyer, Hanon, and Czerny exercises, Diemer’s pedagogical works designed for different levels are closer to Bartok’s *Mikrokosmos* in their principle of exploring sound and different structures of melody, harmony, and rhythm, or Kabalevsky’s children pieces for the weight on expanding musicality. With the focus more on the expressive part of piano playing, similar to many of Chopin and Liszt’s études that were written with the dual intention of learning particular topics and performing, Diemer wrote her contemporary pedagogical works for concert uses at all levels, as seen in the works such as *Space Suite*

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182 Schlegel, 20.
and *Seven Etudes*, which were written for easy to intermediate level pianists and advanced level pianists respectively.

Within such disposition of focus on musical expressivity of 20th-century music, Diemer presents various musical practices of modern music, such as frequent meter changes, atonal sounds, and extended technique, in ways that piano students at the beginning or intermediate levels can digest. Much of the contemporary music is considered too difficult, indigestible, and esoteric, as the 20th- and 21st-century sounds often contain extreme or unusual features. Modern elements such as atonality, polytonality, polymeter, serialism, experimentalism, and aleatoricism primarily belong to high art music and do not appear extensively in pedagogical literature. Diemer saw the need to offer modern sounds to students and amateur pianists, as she had produced a considerable number of pedagogical works with modern bend as discussed in previous sections. Furthermore, she put in much effort to make contemporary music attractive to young pianist, as her pedagogical compositions present various 20th-century concepts without losing aesthetic values. Such works as *Adventures in Sound, Space suite*, and *Reaching Out* are good examples of Diemer’s efforts for making modern techniques more accessible to the beginners. Indeed, her contribution to piano pedagogy is significant in that it adds to the expansion of piano pedagogy and performance literature, presenting opportunity for the widening of student’s musical and artistic palates beyond the 19th-century sound, style, and concept.

Diemer’s emphasis on the concept of accessibility comes forward in the concert works of her intermediate and advanced level as well, especially in the increasing usage of consonant sonority and idioms of popular music throughout her musical path.
Especially from the middle period onward, similar to the pedagogical compositions, the clarity of structure, simplicity of motives, and distinctive contrasts in characters engage the listeners, despite the advanced level of writing. The only major differences lie in heavier writing of counter points and broader chords, wider ranges of expressions, and longer developments with extreme tempi that require considerable stamina to perform.

An example of such elaboration can be seen in the comparison between the tremolo study in the fourth piece of *Seven Etudes* and *Frequency Bands*, the eighth piece of *Space Suite* (Example 92).

Exmaple 92. *Seven Etudes*’s fourth etude\(^{183}\) and *Space Suite*’s eighth piece, *Frequency Bands*, opening measures\(^{184}\)

![Music notation of *Seven Etudes* and *Space Suite*]

Added to these elements is the inclusion of tonal, familiar, and popular music that provide further tangibility to the audience, especially in later works such as *Spirituals for Piano*, *Piano Sonata No.3*, *Holidays of the Year for Piano*, and *Psalms for Piano*; such feature is a contrasting gesture to the method that includes atonal sounds and high art

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\(^{183}\) Diemer, *Seven Etudes* (New York, NY: Carl Fischer Music Inc., 1965); used with permission from Carl Fischer Music Inc.

\(^{184}\) Diemer, *Space Suite* (Indianapolis, IN: Colla Voce Music Inc., 1989), notes; originally published by Plymouth Music Co., Inc. in 1988; used with permission from Colla Voce Music Inc.
idioms in pedagogy works, but the ultimate intention of making the compositions accessible and reaching broader appreciation remains the same.

In summary, both her pedagogical and performance works offer eclectic features that contain various elements of the old and new, already mentioned in Chapter II, section B. Her pedagogical works focus on teaching musicality and artistry more than technicality of piano playing, and thus are intended as performance pieces as well. Her output of pedagogical works also offer much high art concepts and techniques of diverse 20th- and 21st-century music to young and developing pianists in ways that they can absorb and appreciate. Similarly, the concert repertoire, which is mostly for intermediate and above levels, embraces effective writing of great musical dramas and accessible modern sounds that are not extremely esoteric. Furthermore, her concert works of both intermediate and advanced levels also contribute to attaining more appreciators of modern music, by fusing popular and comprehensible music with the contemporary classical elements. In conclusion, the composer’s main philosophy of Gebrauchmusik speaks strongly in both her pedagogical and concert works, in that they embrace diversity of classes and styles that reach out to both the learned and the novice, and in that they are modern music that carries specific and tangible usefulness to students and concert pianists.
IV. Conclusion

A. Overview of 20th- and 21st-century music evolution and current musical trend

From the 20th century onward, classical music has undergone changes that involve wide diversification. Unlike the previous eras of music history, where broad descriptions such as Baroque, Classical, and Romantic informed generalizing features of the music within the period, no dominant style was sufficient to embrace the multiplicity of the 20th- and 21st-century music. Starting with such movements of impressionism and expressionism, tonality was challenged and stretched to atonality, where the hierarchy of pitches according to the tonal theory was questioned, and the composers such as Schoenberg and his pupils of the Second Viennese School attempted to “emancipate dissonance” with the new method of the twelve-tone compositions. Along with such departure from the traditional compositional grammars, came a reactionary movement that looked to the familiar past instead of inventing anew: namely, neo-classicism, which drew inspirations and resources from the music of the past. But more drastic explorations and divergences from the traditional techniques and styles of composition continued throughout the century.

In the 20th century, various radical philosophies of music and music making had accompanied the changes and experiments in classical music. In Italy, such composers as Luigi Russolo and Francesco Pratella, who were involved in the artistic movement known as futurism, attempted to extend the definition of music, by incorporating everyday sounds, including bustling city noise of various machines and interactions. In
search of broader vocabulary of sound, composers such as Charles Ives started exploring microtones or other natural sounds. In the 1940s and 1950s, composers incorporated technology such as magnetic tape, computers, synthesizers, and other electronic devices to music. During the mid century, such composers as John cage and Morton Feldman introduced elements of chance in musical composition, thus expanding experimentalism in 20th-century music. Some composers heavily used elements of non-Western music or synthetic scales, as seen in Messiaen’s music, as well as looking into nature, such as bird songs, in attempts to find new sound sources.

Alongside these radical modern movements in classical music, the growth and divergence of popular music also came about. With the technology of recordings and radio increasingly available, popular music, jazz, film music, and various crossover music grew in number and stature throughout the century. With the help of mass media, these popular genres reached people readily and widely, and much of them were made with immediate appeal and appreciation in mind, unlike the modern classical music that heavily deviated from tonal music and thus seriously alienated the general audiences. The definition of music has been extended and challenged by new compositional techniques and styles, such as total-serialism, aleatoric music, and the inclusion of electronic sounds, industrial noises, as in futurism, or even ambient sounds and silence, as in John Cage’s 4’33”. Such abstraction in the classical music making has broadened the gap between the high art and popular or crossover music, where the former became increasingly esoteric to the general public. Coupled with such dichotomization of music where the latter is gaining greater audience, there are growing skepticisms and concerns about the future of
In order to react to such gap between the classical music and popular culture or general audience, from the later 20th century into the 21st century, increasing attempts of conglomeration and simplification of the diversity of the 20th-century music has been taking place in movements such as minimalism, neo-Romanticism, poly-stylism and eclecticism. Contrary to the extreme complexity in modernist music, minimalistic compositions often simplify materials to transparent level, where the sound and procedures become more readily graspable. Neo-romanticism looked back at 19th-century sound and sentiment, incorporating expressivity and emotions that are tangible to general audience. Many composers fused the two approaches along with various influences, such as popular music, non-Western music, quotations from past well-known music, and simplified modern idioms. As a result, composers have been allowed to freely use all materials of past, present, popular, classical, and diverse ethnic music, and more composers sought to include elements with more immediate appreciation and understanding from the general public in mind. Accordingly, the concept of high art music began to embrace music beyond classical music, further obliterating dominance of one particular sound or style, and attempting to obscure the boundaries between high and low music; the discrimination is to be lessened, under the general umbrella of definition of music, which would be described only as good or bad.

B. Compositional disposition of Diemer and contemporary composers

In the atmosphere of the 21st-century compositional trends, Diemer is closer to the
group of composers who use the eclectic approach. She certainly has shown the concern
of reaching a wider audience, as her philosophy of composition centers on
Gebrauchmusik principle, which is realized through accessibility, eclecticism, and
functionality. All of her published works speak of such elements, even when she is using
heavy chromaticism or atonality, complex rhythms, tone rows, and other experimental
techniques of the 20th- and 21st-centuries. Through energetic rhythms, colorful sonorities,
and well-guided experimental techniques, her piano works have proved to be effective for
pedagogical purposes as well as in performances. In all of her choices of including
particular compositional methods or sounds, she made certain that they were “always in
the service of creative expressiveness” that would “offer some knowledge, philosophy,
insight, emotional release, diversion, or entertainment to those who hear or perform the
music.”

Furthermore, emphasis on musical expressiveness in modern music resonates
especially strongly in Diemer’s numerous outputs of compositions for pedagogy. By
presenting many features of the unconventional contemporary music, such as
experimentalism, atonality, and serialism in accessible yet various creative and colorful
ways, she has contributed to the expansion of young student’s musical and artistic palates
beyond the 19th-century sound, style, and sentiment, preparing them for advanced level
modern works, and possibly ensuring the endurance of current music for the future.
Hence, by making 20th-century high art music more accessible in both pedagogical and
concert solo piano works through simple yet creative fusion of various musical styles and
concepts that focuses on the expressivity of music, Diemer’s works for solo piano

185 Schlegel, 19-20.
collectively demonstrate the poly-stylistic trend of 21st century, making significant
correspondence especially for the survival of piano literature into the 21st century.

Aside from such philosophy of music making that is in line with the current trend
of pluralism, Diemer is at the same time, an independent composer who purposefully
negates belonging to a set entity, other than herself. She states, “I think what I have is
various elements that are always going to be there…an interest in melody, rhythm, and
structure….I like to feel I’m not bound by a certain set of rules. I can make my own rules
and I always do.” Diemer’s further asserts her independence as a composer from being
defined as a woman composer. In the 21st century, women composers have been rising in
their activity and acknowledgement at prestigious level unparalleled thus far in music
history. However, acknowledging that women composers are still the minority, Diemer
expresses caution to be labeled or considered differently because of her gender. On
thoughts of being a woman composer, she states:

[Many people] cannot imagine a woman who has enough energy to write
something big, like a symphony or a string quartet and so… you have to be
careful as a woman composer not to fall into that [situation].

She had also witnessed women composers who were conscious of the comparison with
men and began imitating their approach, often resulting in writing “very uncompromising
and stringent works,” where consequently, their own compositional voice is missed. Or,
on the flipside of the negative stereotyping and overshadowing of the majority, Diemer is
just as conscious against considering talented woman composers as “supposed rarity,”

186 Schlegle, 24.
188 Ibid.
that draws special attention.\textsuperscript{189} Diemer simply wishes to be thought of as a composer, without the gender specification or stylistic/methodical categorization. As a composer, she hopes that her individual voice and expressions reach “all” listeners through her compositions, where her music would be remembered and valued in the future as well as present.\textsuperscript{190}

Diemer emphasizes on the importance of the solidity of a composer’s sense of self\textsuperscript{191} and further comments, “The creative process—doing something no one has ever done before—has to have your entire focus.”\textsuperscript{192} A dedicated musician whose inexhaustible dedication and creativity for music has come to define her life, such principle of Diemer resonates in all of her past and ongoing music activities: her performances as a pianist, organist, and collaborative artist, her compositions and articles with various purposes and foci of pedagogy, and her contributions to various musical communities of professional and amateur circles are testimonies of such devotion. She is duly esteemed as one of the most prominent musical figures of the twentieth and twenty first century,\textsuperscript{193} and her continuous efforts to make accessible, eclectic, and functional contemporary music is worthy of accolade and recognition in the making of current music history.

\textsuperscript{189} Schlegel, 29.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid. 31.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid, 22.
\textsuperscript{193} LePage, 54.
Bibliography


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———. “Little Toccata for Piano,” score, 1982, Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.


———. “Preludes,” score, 1945, Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.


———. “Seven Pieces for Marilyn,” score, 1982, Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.

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———. “Sonata No. 2,” score, 1955, Special Collections, Davidson Library,
University of California, Santa Barbara.


———. “Suite No.1: Landscapes,” score, 1947, Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.


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———. “Suite No.2 for Children “At the Zoo”,” score, 1952, Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.


———. “Winter for Piano,” score, 1952, Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.


Appendix A: Composers’s Solo Piano Works: Publication, Collection, and Discography Information

DISCOGRAPHY*

Chromatic Fantasy
*Eastman School of Music Student Composition Symposium*
Emma Lou Diemer, piano
Analog reel to reel tape, 1946,
Kept at Eastman Audio Archives

Suite No. 1: Landscapes
*Eastman School of Music Second Annual American Music Students’ Symposium*
Rosalyn Caplovitz, piano
Analog reel to reel tape, 1948,
Kept at Eastman School of Music audio archives as Four Poems for Piano

Toccata for Piano
1. *Music by Women Composers, vol.1*
Rosemary Platt, piano
Analog sound disc, 33 1/3 rpm, 1980
Coronet Recording Co. LPS 3105

2. *Worlds of Music*
David Willoughby
Compact disc, 1996

3. Cindy Yee-Jean Wu in Recital, Bachelor of Music requirement
Digital tape reel, 2 track, 10 inch, 1997
Kept at Eastman School of Music

4. April in Santa Cruz
Mary Jane Cope, piano
Analog tape cassette, 1989
Kept at University of California, Santa Cruz, Library

5. Lelia McFarlane Molthrop in Recital, Bachelor of Music requirement
Lelia McFarlane Molthrop
Digital tape reel, 2 track, 10 inch, 1993
Kept at Eastman School of Music

* Schlegel’s Bio-Bibliography consists of discography information up to the year 2000.
   Hiroko Kunitake, piano
   2 compact discs, 1999

7. *Muses Nine: Eight American Composers Plus One Pianist*
   Becky Billock
   Compact disc, 2011
   CD Baby, #164784

*Encore,*
*Max Lifchitz Plays American Piano Music*
Max Lifchitz, piano
Compact disc, 1993
Vienna Modern Masters, CD 2002

*Seven Pieces for Piano*
Emma Lou Diemer, piano
Compact disc, 2011
Albany Records, CD 1302

*Fantasy, d34-5*

1. *Sunbursts: Solo Piano Works by 7 American Women*
   Nanette Kaplan Solomon, piano
   Compact Disc, 1998
   Leonarda LE 345

2. *Women Composers and the Men in their Lives*
   Leanne Rees, piano
   Compact disc, 2000
   Fleur de Son Classics, FDS 57939

*Serenade/Toccata, from Sonata No.3*

1. *Something Old, Something New*
   Joan DeVee Dixon, piano
   Compact Disc, 1999
   RBW Record Co. RBW CD016

2. *American Women Modern Voices in Piano Music*
   Nancy Boston, piano
   Compact Disc, 2006
   Oasis, B000ICLS6U