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Dmitri Kabalevsky *1904–1987*

Dmitri Kabalevsky was a Russian composer who never left his own country. He lived in Moscow where he taught piano, composed, and took part in many Soviet musical activities. He was the editor of a Russian music magazine and was, for a time, president of the Union of Soviet Composers.

Kabalevsky was born in St. Petersburg in 1904 just five years after the birth of Tchernin and two years before Shostakovich was born. When Dmitri was six, he began to play the piano by ear, but it was not until he was fourteen that he had his first music lessons. In that year, his family moved from St. Petersburg to Moscow and Dmitri enrolled in the Scriabin Music School. Later, he studied at the Moscow Conservatory from which he graduated with highest honors.

As a young man, Kabalevsky taught at the Scriabin Music School and later at the Moscow Conservatory. As a composer, he won two of Russia's highest prizes: the Order of Merit and the Stalin Prize.

Kabalevsky wrote symphonies; ballets; operas; music for radio, stage, and the movies; and major works for the piano. While he was teaching at the Scriabin School, he wrote hundreds of pieces for his own piano students. Today, these pieces have spread around the world, and pianists in many countries study and enjoy them.

The pieces in our collection are taken from *Twenty-four Little Pieces, Op. 39*.

A Little Joke

From *Twenty-four Little Pieces*, Op. 39

Gaily and quite fast

Dmitri Kabalevsky

The musical score is written for piano in 2/4 time. It consists of four systems of two staves each. The first system begins with a *mf* dynamic marking. The melody in the right hand features a sequence of chords: a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, with a fermata over the eighth note. The bass line in the left hand consists of eighth notes with a slur and a breath mark. Fingering numbers (1, 3, 5) are indicated for the bass line. The second system starts at measure 5 and ends with a fermata over the final chord. The third system starts at measure 9. The fourth system starts at measure 13 and ends with a fermata over the final chord, with a *f* dynamic marking. The piece concludes with a final chord and a fermata.