

ESSENTIAL KEYBOARD TRIOS

Music for Six Hands, One Piano

10 Intermediate to Early Advanced Selections

in Their Original Form

Selected and Edited by Lucy Mauro and Scott Beard

Historical Background

Keyboard trios (music for six hands at one piano) have been a unique part of piano ensemble repertoire for the past 150 years. Works for three players at separate keyboards can be found in the 17th and 18th centuries, such as an untitled piece for three organs by Pietro DellaValle (1586–1652), concertos for three harpsichords by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) and the “Lodron” concerto by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791). However, it was in the early 19th century—with the development of the piano and larger instruments—that compositions for six hands at one keyboard began to appear in the form of both original compositions and arrangements of popular works.

As with many piano duets, teachers often composed six-hand pieces for their pupils. Some of the earliest composers of six-hand music include Wilhelm Friedrich Ernst Bach (1759–1845), Joseph Mazzinghi (1765–1844), Carolus Antonius Fodor (1768–1846) and Carl Czerny (1791–1857).

In the 19th century, *salon* works for six hands gained in popularity, and by the early 20th century, the educational value of this ensemble became widely recognized by teachers, pedagogical composers and publishers alike. Many compositions from this period carry subtitles such as “The Three Sisters” or the “The Three Amateurs,” reflecting ensemble playing in the home with friends and family. Today, six-hand works are included in private and group lessons, with new compositions and arrangements being published regularly.

In addition to its pedagogical use, the six-hand medium has occasionally found a place on the contemporary concert stage, with works such as Noël Lee’s *Pret à partir* and *Trois sur un clavier*, Peter Schickele’s *Chapbook* and passages from George Crumb’s *Celestial Mechanics*.

About This Collection

To facilitate reading, the pieces in this collection are presented in score form, which enables each player

to see all the parts. Fingerings, redistributions and all parenthetical material are editorial. Ornaments are realized in footnotes at their initial appearance in each work. Performers are encouraged to experiment with additional ornamentation and other realizations as appropriate to the work’s style and level of the players.

Pedaling is left to the discretion of the performers. Footnotes indicate the few instances where the composer’s original pedal markings appear. Final pedaling decisions should be based on a number of factors, including style, balance, musical intentions, the level of the performers, the actual instrument and the performance environment (acoustics).

Balance is one of the most important elements in six-hand playing. While some composers suggest a louder dynamic for the most prominent part, others indicate the same dynamic level for all three parts. Performers will need to be aware of the featured melodic material and how the dynamics in all three parts relate to each other.

Performance Suggestions

Three performers playing at one keyboard requires special consideration with regard to seating positions. Individual adjustable benches work well and may be positioned with the narrow sides of the benches facing the keyboard, with the two outer benches placed at a slight angle. This allows for individual height and distance adjustment, and also provides somewhat more room than the traditional placement of the benches. In the absence of adjustable benches, side chairs may be used, or even a combination of side chairs and a traditional bench. Each player will need to find his or her comfortable position and, most importantly, maintain that seating position when practicing alone.

When performing six-hand works, careful attention is required for finger and hand placement on the keyboard. In general, each player is confined to a specific range on the piano. Occasionally, performers will need to exchange notes quickly, or fingers and

hands may overlap. The editors have added footnotes to address passages where players' hands must cross.

Pedaling also requires special considerations in six-hand performance. Because of the proximity to the pedal, the *secondo* player usually performs the pedaling. In some instances, pedaling could be shared by the players. For example, the *terzo* player may use the *una corda* pedal while the *secondo* manages the damper pedal. In any event, good ensemble playing requires that pedaling decisions be made well in advance of the performance, and any special pedal usage should be marked clearly on the score.

To help students distinguish their individual part quickly while reading in score form, it may be helpful to highlight—in different colors—the roman numerals at the beginning of each system for the first (*primo*), second (*secondo*) and third (*terzo*) parts.

Two final considerations for this type of ensemble playing are cueing and page turning. Performers need to decide which player will be responsible for discreetly gesturing beginnings, endings and other important points of phrasing. For secure performances, cues and page-turning designations should be clearly labeled on the score.

Pedagogical Value

Keyboard trios are not only an enjoyable and entertaining form of ensemble music, but also an effective medium for building musicianship and ensemble-playing skills. Six-hand music develops listening skills, technique, rhythmic control and score-reading abilities. This type of ensemble playing also builds a sense of teamwork and leadership skills. Teachers have many possibilities for forming keyboard trios in their studio, including combining friends, siblings or other family members, or students of various ages and levels of advancement. The works in this collection make excellent recital pieces, as performers and audiences alike enjoy the unique musical experience of six hands at one piano.

Suggested Reading

Bigler, Carole and Valerie Lloyd-Watts. *Ornamentation: A Question & Answer Manual*. Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 1995.

Maxwell, Grant L. *Music for Three or More Pianists: A Historical Survey and Catalogue*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993.

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BOLERO

Jean Louis Streabbog
(1835–1886)

Allegro moderato

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 6, and the second system contains measures 7 through 12. Each system consists of three staves labeled I, II, and III. Staff I is in the treble clef, Staff II is in the treble clef, and Staff III is in the bass clef. The music is in 3/4 time and features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamics such as *f* (forte) and *mf* (mezzo-forte) are indicated. Fingering numbers (1-5) are provided for many notes. There are two instances of *8va* (octave) markings with dashed lines above the staff. The score includes numerous accents and slurs. The first system ends with a repeat sign. The second system begins with a boxed measure number '7' in the first measure.

DAS DREYBLATT

Wilhelm Friedrich Ernst Bach
(1759–1845)

Andante con moto

For hand positions, see About the Composers and the Music (p. 139)

The musical score is written for three hands (I, II, III) in 2/4 time. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major). The tempo is **Andante con moto**. The score includes various ornaments and fingerings. Hand I has ornaments (a) and (b). Hand II has an ornament (c) and a trill (d). Hand III has triplets and other rhythmic patterns. Dynamics include piano (*p*) and fortissimo (*ff*). The score is divided into two systems of staves.

(a) Play the grace note almost simultaneously with the main note.

(c) Play an unmeasured trill beginning on the upper note.



ROMANCE

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873–1943)

Andante sostenuto

I
 II
 III

p harmonioso

① 2 Pedale (una corda and damper pedals)

4

I
 II
 III

pp

pp

① The pedal indications in measures 1, 34 and 47 are the composer's.