CPP-4: Syllabus (2024)

The course

Introduction to Intermediate-Level Study

Welcome to CPP-4! This class represents the second of five intermediate-level piano classes. In contrast to CPP-3, it will include only one sonatina and one Baroque selection; the rest will be from the Romantic/Modern eras. The focus of this grade will be primarily on chord comprehension and fluency, exploring a wide variety of chord styles. A secondary focus is on technical development using demanding etudes (which often have chord components embedded within).

This course is divided into two "semesters" of 13 weeks each. There will be a break for most of December in between these semesters. Expect the 13-week sessions to be intensive, requiring a minimum of 1 hour of piano practice per day while classes are in session. Since classes run for 26 weeks in the year, you can always lighten your practice load during the "off-season."

Composer study

Schumann and Tchaikovsky

Schumann and Tchaikovsky are Romantic-era composers who each wrote a prominent album for piano students. These collections are staples of the intermediate piano era. There will be a couple of selections from each of these composers throughout the class.

Chords

Both semesters involve regular discussion of different types of chords (major, minor, 7, diminished, etc), and cadences.

Semester 1:

- The diatonic scale and each key's chords in relation to it
- Functional chord symbols and root/quality chord symbols
- Inverted chords, solid chords, broken chords, 4-note chords, waltz-style chords

Semester 2:

- Alberti bass chords, right-hand chords, 158s, BTs, bass chords, and other left-hand chord patterns
- Basic composition exercises using tonic/dominant chords

Technical development

Semester 1:

- Broken chord study
- Overlapping notes in each hand
- *Allegro vivace* chord patterns passing between hands

Semester 2:

- Contrasting hand texture studies
- Left hand melody

- Meter shifting
- Trills
- Grace notes

Ear training

Each week has an ear training requirement. These will be consistent with RCM 4/ABRSM 4, and will include:

- intervals of major/minor 3rds, and perfect 4ths, 5ths and octaves
- Clap in a pulse (2s, 3s, 4s) as well as clap back a 4-measure pattern by ear
- Identifying major/minor triads by ear, as well as an individual tone from it (1, 3, or 5)
- Medium-length melodic playbacks and melody echoing
- Answering questions about a performed piano excerpt

Notation and reading

The ABRSM and RCM have sight reading requirements, which are much simpler than the grade 4 level pieces. At this level, you are expected to be able to read music slowly and competently at a grade 2 level. The specific requirements are:

- Reading a 4-measure rhythm and accurately clapping it
- Performing 4-8 measures of music on the spot (slowly) at roughly a Level 2 complexity

Rhythm

Time signatures:

- Standard time signatures: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 3/8, 6/8
- Shifting meter
- Irregular time signatures
- Swing and syncopation

Rhythmic concepts:

- 32^{nd} notes
- Double dot
- 8^{th} note triplets
- Grouping rests
- Simple and compound time, and duple/triple/quadruple time

Other theory

- Relative and parallel majors and minors
- Sonatina form
- Interval identification (major, minor, perfect, diminished, augmented)
- Types of scales and how they're built, and the chords in them (major, harmonic minor, natural minor, and melodic minor)
- Enharmonic equivalents, and whole steps/half steps
- Double sharp
- Standard orchestral instruments
- All key signatures up to 5 sharps/flats (circle/table of 5ths)

Composition

- Grouping beats and rests
- Transposing a melody an octave
- Transposing a melody to the alto clef
- Writing a short melody with tonic/dominant chords

Exam preparation

Supplemental materials will be provided at the end of the 26 lessons to give you guidance on exam preparation (RCM, ABRSM, MTB). Some people might choose this as a project for the spring/summer months, though it is not required. I encourage everyone to prepare for an exam whether or not you take one, because it gives you the opportunity to polish a handful of pieces from the class.