CPP-5: Syllabus

The course

Introduction to Intermediate-Level Study

Welcome to CPP-5! This class represents the third of five intermediate-level piano classes. We cover all areas of the repertoire – Baroque, Classical, Romantic, early 20th-C, modern, and etudes – but because of the rich quantity of repertoire in Romantic-era music and onward, we focus in that direction. The focus of this grade will be primarily theory-based. This is the first grade (as per the RCM) where a theory exam is a required *co-requisite* of a practical examination. Prior to grade 5, theory study is optional (but useful, obviously). Our other aim, aside from broad theoretical competency, is to continue working with concepts from earlier grades, particularly CPP-4: we will continue working with chords and various chord patterns, difficult rhythms, hand independence, sight reading, ear development, hand postural issues, and so forth.

Note that CPP-5 corresponds with the RCM-5 level, as well as the ABRSM-4 level. We also cover ABRSM-4 material in CPP-4, making CPP-4 and CPP-5 both roughly equivalent to ABRSM-4. This is because the RCM grades go from grades 1-10, whereas the ABRSM goes from grades 1-8.

Examinations

If you decide that you want to do an RCM examination, you will need to schedule both a practical exam *and* a theory exam. In Canada and the US, theory examinations are in mid-August, mid-December, and mid-May of each year. The timing of this course is such that you would be well-prepared to do a theory examination in mid-May if you so choose; just be sure to sign up before the deadline in February. Practical examinations (where you perform your pieces, scales, etc.) are in August, January (December in the US), and June (May in the US) of each year. If you'd like to do examinations, I'd recommend doing your theory exam in May, and your practical exam in June, if Canadian, or in August, if American. While you could theoretically do an exam in May as an American, it doesn't leave much time to prepare your technique and pieces after the conclusion of the course.

If you are interested in taking an ABRSM-4 examination, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Wales host in-person exams in June/July. There is no theory requirement. The ABRSM offers remote "performance grades" for doing examinations online, and the MTB offers something similar. These can be done at any time.

Examinations are fully optional; you do not need to take one. For some, it can provide an extra bit of incentive to polish pieces, and it can serve as validation of your increasing musical development. For others, it can conjure terrible memories of school, or it can make the experience of learning piano too strict. Choose your own adventure here.

Structure of the course

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 (not including theory) 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."

Nearly every week we will work on some musical excerpt or other, with the aim to get quite sufficient at 10 pieces. Please refer to the "Grade 5 Pieces Grid" document to see what the categories of those 10 pieces are; it provides a top-level view.

Planning your repertoire

You can use the "Grade 5 Pieces Grid", "Grade 5 Pieces", and "Grade 5 Book List" documents to plan out which pieces you would like to specialize in, and which books you will need to purchase to do so. I recommend selecting pieces based on preference and/or which books you would like to have in your collection.

Keep in mind that an RCM examination requires 5 performance selections: two etudes, and a piece from each of list A (baroque), list B (classical), and list C (romantic and modern). You would want to follow a similar strategy in planning your repertoire for an MTB examination as well. Performance grades in the ABRSM require four pieces. We cover all these areas throughout the course, but we focus much more heavily on list C selections.

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. As with CPP-4, there will be a handful of selections from each of these composers throughout the class.

Kabalevsky

Kabalevsky's music has been with us since the beginning lessons of CPP, and he composed music appropriate for beginners all the way through very advanced students. We will be working with op. 39 and/or op.27 in this class, which many of you coming from previous classes will already have.

Handel

As per the Grade 5 theory requirement, we will study Handel's *Messiah* in this class.

Mozart

As per the Grade 5 theory requirement, we will study Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in this class.

Arlen

As per the Grade 5 theory requirement, we will study Arlen's *Over the Rainbow* in this class.

Music theory

Everyone is required to use the RCM Celebrate Theory 5 book to follow along the theory assignments in this class. In previous classes, I have created my own theory assignments. This year, we will use an official guide, because a) it's a good one, and b) it'll help us to make sure we cover all the necessary ground to pass an RCM 5 theory examination (whether you take a real exam or not).

I also highly recommend getting your hands on an RCM 5 practice examination booklet. It is a great help when trying to put together all the theory concepts we learn over 20+ weeks. Both theory books are listed in the "Grade 5 Book List" document.

A full list of all the theory concepts we learn in this class is beyond the scope of this document. Please refer to “Grade 5 checklist”, which outlines in detail everything you will learn in this class.

Also refer to the “Grade 5 ear training”, “Grade 5 sight reading”, and “Grade 5 technique” documents for further details on what you’ll work on in these specific areas.