# CPP-6: Syllabus

## The course

### Introduction to Upper-Intermediate Study

Welcome to CPP-6! This class represents the fourth of five intermediate-level piano classes. We cover most areas of the repertoire – Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and early 20th-C – and interweave some Etudes. Depending on interest, we can optionally study two additional months (May/June) to learn some contemporary music. The focus of this grade will be breadth – an equal spread across all eras – and music appreciation. We will do plenty of listening exercises to widen our understanding of musical styles and genres, especially in regards to Baroque and Classical music. This is the second grade (as per the RCM) where a theory exam is a required *co-requisite* of a practical examination. As such, we will weave in a study of level 6 theory into our class. As is consistent with the earlier intermediate levels, 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-6 corresponds with the RCM-6 level, as well as the ABRSM-5 level. This is because the RCM grades go from grades 1-10, whereas the ABRSM goes from grades 1-8. My main focus is on repertoire from RCM, and not ABRSM, but I will provide additional information on exam components for ABRSM (such as technique).

### 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-5 examination, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Wales host in-person exams in June/July. As far as I understand, 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. With MTB, you should be able to submit repertoire we learn in this class. For ABRSM, make sure to refer to their syllabus, which updates every two years; you will need to learn a separate set of pieces for their exam.

Please note that for an RCM exam, you must also prepare two etudes. In this class, we work on etudes as supplemental practice exercises and not main pieces.

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 in December in between these semesters. Expect the 13-week sessions to be intensive, requiring an absolute minimum of 1 hour of piano practice per day (not including theory or music appreciation) 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, because there is a lot of great music at this level. We will lightly attempt 12 pieces throughout this course (3 per musical era), and I recommend you aim to become very good at 4 selections this year (1 per musical era). In other words, practice all 12 pieces to an acceptable level, but aim for a high-quality, memorized performance of 4 pieces.

## Grade 6 repertoire

You can use the "Grade 6 Pieces" and "Grade 6 Book List" PDFs to see what you'll be working on this year. For focus, we will all be working on the same pieces, so this year you do not have to select pieces. There are many other excellent pieces which are left out, particularly in the contemporary genre, so I encourage you to explore these on your own time. Since these pieces are historical, you do not need to purchase any books; however, if you like books for your collection, the "Grade 6 Book List" will give you some suggestions.

You *will* need to purchase the theory book (Celebrate Theory 6, RCM) to do the theory exercises for this class. The RCM Etudes 6 book is also a useful supplement, but optional.

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 noodle around with some etudes, but we do not learn etudes as serious selections this year.

## Composer study

**Bach**

At a grade 6 level, Bach's Little Preludes become accessible. This is the first step before getting into Bach's inventions, which we will study in music theory this year in preparation for trying our hands at an invention next year. We'll also take a look at the Brandenburg Concertos, a masterpiece collection of Bach's keyboard compositions.

**Mozart & Beethoven**

Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* is a fun topic of study, and gives us a chance to explore sonata form in an orchestral composition.

I also want to take you on a tour through some Beethoven compositions (sonatas, string quartets) as a way to get more familiar with sonata form (and to listen to some great music).

## Music theory

Just like with CPP-5, everyone is required to use the RCM Celebrate Theory 6 book to follow along the theory assignments in this class. It'll help us to make sure we cover all the necessary ground to pass an RCM 6 theory examination, which is a co-requisite of the performance pieces (whether you take a real exam or not).

I also highly recommend getting your hands on an RCM 6 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 6 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 6 checklist", which outlines in detail everything you will learn in this class.

Also refer to the "Grade 6 ear training", "Grade 6 sight reading", and "Grade 6 technique" documents for further details on what you'll work on in these specific areas.