

# The Best Of The British

## Selected Educational Piano Works By Alec Rowley

Alec Rowley (1892–1958), British composer and pianist, was well known during his lifetime for his contributions to piano teaching literature.<sup>1</sup> In his profile on Rowley, William Elkin discussed at some length Rowley's stature as a leading composer of educational music in Great Britain and also Rowley's dismay that he had not reached fame as a composer of more serious music. Despite this statement, Elkin proceeded to make note that other countries highly regarded Rowley's music:

Alec Rowley, who is the only British composer to be found in the catalog of CF Peters, the famous Leipzig publisher, was extensively advertised throughout the German Reich... Although he is reputed to be the favourite British composer in Japan, I fear that in England his name will be linked inseparably with educational music.<sup>2</sup>

Rowley's prominence and stature as a composer of solid educational music topped the popularity charts outside of Great Britain, especially in Germany and Japan.

Rowley's compositional output consists of vocal songs, operettas, organ music, church music, symphonic works and instrumental-combination works, and, of course, educational music for the piano—both solo and piano duet. His output of piano music is unprecedented and unmatched by any other British composer of his day: documented are

247 pieces of piano music for the beginning-to later-intermediate/early-advanced pianist—some of these are in collections, thus this figure does not even account for pieces within the collections. Rowley's music has largely gone unappreciated over the years and has not been thoroughly explored nor taught much by piano teachers today. The wealth of his music and the solid craftsmanship of the pieces should be appreciated by more teachers. His music provides piano teachers with a resource of excellent teaching pieces for students of all ages and deserves more attention to and placement in piano teacher's book shelves.

Rowley also was dedicated to research in music education, which led him to write several books on musicianship and repertoire such as *Practical Musicianship: A Handbook for Teachers and Students* and *Sightreading at the Piano in Three Stages*, and as joint author with J. Raymond Tobin, *Graded Tests in Practical Musicianship in Three Stages*, *Harmonization at the Piano in Three Stages*, *Melody Making at the Piano in Three Stages* and *Musical Form at the Piano*. In addition to writing and composing, Rowley was active also as a music critic, examiner and lecturer. Apparently his lectures not only provided a musical learning experience but also became a popular form of entertainment: "So popular are they that rumor has it that seats must be booked well in advance."<sup>3</sup>

Rowley was born March 13, 1892, in Weybridge, Surrey, and died June 12, 1958, in

London. Rowley's only sibling, a younger sister, Doris, was a gifted writer, and later in his career, Alec set her lyrics to his music. Rowley's musical potential surfaced when, at age 14, he almost perfectly sight-read J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* on the organ. The following year, 1906, he entered London's Royal Academy of Music, where he continued his studies for the next nine years under the tutelage of Frederick Corder in composition and Henry Richards in organ. The Royal Academy of Music awarded Rowley several scholarships and awards, and for three years in succession, he also received the highest awards for piano, organ and harmony. Rowley continued to excel in his musical training, and by his 21st birthday, he had passed more than 40 required examinations at the Royal Academy of Music.

At the outbreak of World War I, Rowley was drafted by the Royal Flying Corps. His service was cut short and he was discharged on an "invalid" basis. He returned to the Royal Academy of Music and graduated in 1919 and attempted to stay on as a sub-professor. While the Royal Academy did not accept him, the Trinity College of Music, London, did. They invited Rowley to join their staff, and upon acceptance, he became the coordinator and instructor of piano and composition. From both the Royal Academy of Music and Trinity College, Rowley acquired numerous distinguished credentials: Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music (LRAM), Associate of the Royal Academy of Music (ARAM), Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music (FRAM.), Fellow of the Trinity College of London (FTCL), and the Fellow of the Royal College of Organists (FRCO).

In addition to his duties at Trinity College of Music, Rowley became the organist and master of music at St. Alban's Church, Teddington, which was known as the Cathedral of the Thames Valley. Because of his association with St. Alban's, his social and musical life broadened considerably. Aiden Clarke, a good friend of Rowley's, became a partner in Row-

ley's choral writing by providing the composer with texts for many of his choral works. In addition to his church duties, he also became involved with Edgar Moy, fellow pianist, and together they hosted a radio show that presented classical music and duo piano works. This broadcast often featured live performances by these two accomplished pianists. Initially these shows were only broadcast in England, but because of their popularity as well as advancements in radio technology, they eventually were broadcast throughout Sweden, France, Germany, Australia, South Africa and America.

In addition to his love of and for music, Rowley was an enthusiastic cricket and tennis player. He continued to play tennis and even entered local contests until his death on June 12, 1958, in London. On that day, Rowley collapsed and died after successfully completing the final winning stroke of a tennis match. His wish had been fulfilled, for that was how Rowley said he would like to go.

In his book, *A Short History of Keyboard Music*, Frank Kirby states that "prior to the twentieth century, keyboard music in England lacked a distinct nationalistic style."<sup>4</sup> For many generations, English composer's conceptions of a musical idiom were based almost entirely upon their knowledge of the German and Austrian music tradition. The trend was for most English-born composers to study music in and of Germany, although the Germanic-influence was dispelled toward the end of the 19th century by the English "renaissance" movement. The growth of this renaissance was influenced by two distinct features of English musical life: the revival of English folk song and the development of musical anti-quarianism. Also toward the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, certain events gave rise to musical and cultural advancement in England. As early as 1872, musical competitions started to form—as well as choral festivals—and these began to spread across England. Because of this, the need for music and discovering new music

helped to boost Britain's musical morale.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, during this time, concert agencies were formed, the oldest and most reliably documented being the concert agency of Vert at Cork Street, London. This gave rise to more agencies being formed resulting in more public performances by musicians, and again, the need for more and new music. Indeed, prior to the First World War, the English public only recognized the musical contributions made by foreign musicians. Thus, the composers' careers often were jeopardized by the English public refusing to take them seriously.

Following the First World War, the formation of the British Broadcasting Company, which immediately attracted a regular audience of about 50,000 people, made a huge impact on musical life in England. These radio broadcasts began to feature more variety of music, music that was not exclusively for wealthy music patrons, and the music of British composers. Out of all of these events rose several British composers who would impact the musical scene in England and provide for a rich musical environment, which in turn, would provide the impetus for Rowley and other composers to write music and be accepted by the general public. These composers were: Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughn Williams, Sir Granville Bantock, Frank Bridge, Sir Arnold Bax, Cyril Meir Scott and Arthur Bliss. Interestingly, none of these composers would come close to the compositional output of piano music written by Rowley.

Rowley's piano music appeals not only to the educated musician, but to the general public as well. The essence of his piano compositions lie in their carefully constructed melodic lines, the majority of which are tuneful and often reminiscent of folk tunes. Rowley occasionally incorporated familiar melodies into his piano pieces, such as the *The Mulberry Bush* and *The First Noel*, in his "Winter" *Sonatina*. Rowley's early piano pieces favor a more conservative harmonic language: it is not until the *Sonatinas*, *Polyrhythms*, *Thirty*

*Melodious and Rhythmic Studies*, *Études in Tonality*<sup>6</sup> and the *Sonata* that he begins to include seventh and ninth chords, chromaticism, augmented chords, modulations and abrupt shifts in tonality in his harmonic vocabulary. His favorite genre of composition was the character piece. His skill of depicting moods, emotions, events and characters are best expressed in these pieces. In all of Rowley's piano pieces the form is clearly outlined; therefore, the student is able to concentrate solely on the musical and technical qualities of the piece.

Rowley's music spans the beginning, early-to late-intermediate and advanced levels. His piano music was regarded as the best teaching literature of the day and his works provide a wealth of material for the piano teacher and student.

Two of the most comprehensive lists of Rowley's piano music are located in the *Pianist's Resource Guide* (Maurice Hinson)<sup>7</sup> and *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* (Jane Magrath).<sup>8</sup> Both of these sources offer some of the teaching literature, but not all, since many of Rowley's works are no longer in print. Hinson lists the following works which are still available today: *Twelve Little Fantasy Studies*; *Polyrhythms*, *Op. 50*; *Études in Tonality*, *Op. 44*; *Sonatinas* and *Five Miniature Preludes and Fugues*. Magrath lists the following: *Elves and Fairies*; *Five Miniature Preludes and Fugues*; *From My Sketchbook*; *Twelve Little Fantasy Studies*; *10 Miniatures From a Paris Window*; *Happenings*; *From Dell and Hillside*; *Jolidays*; *Marionnettes*; *Sonatinas*; *30 Melodious and Rhythmic Studies*; *Polyrhythms*, *Op. 50*; and *Études in Tonality*, *Op. 44*.<sup>9</sup>

Finding interesting music for the early-intermediate through the later-intermediate/early-advanced student can often be a challenge. Rowley's pieces appeal to students and teachers alike for their attractive sound and their solid technical and musical challenges. The patterns lie well in the hands, and the form of his pieces are clearly outlined,

thus the student is able to concentrate more easily on music, rather than be concerned about the form. Of all of his pieces, three collections stand as a testimony of Rowley's dedication to writing for the students: the *Five Miniature Preludes and Fugues*<sup>10</sup>; *Études in Tonality, Op. 44*, and *Polyrhythms, Op. 50*.<sup>11</sup> It is these three collections that deserve a regular space on the piano teacher's bookshelf and in their teaching curriculum.

The *Five Miniature Preludes and Fugues*, written in 1946 and published by JW Chester, are still available today. They are written for the early-intermediate pianist and focus specifically on early contrapuntal playing. Each prelude and fugue is only one page in length, ranging anywhere from 17 to 33 measures. Every prelude offers a musical and/or technical challenge to work with, and every fugue presents a typical subject, answer and potential for stretto, inversion and augmentation of the fugue subject. Rowley indicates on the score of each fugue which contrapuntal techniques are being used. All of these pieces lie well in the hand, especially the smaller hand of the early-intermediate student.

Rowley also uses "friendly keys," such as C major, D minor, A minor and F major. The teacher will have the opportunity to discuss contrapuntal techniques, such as subject, answer, stretto, augmentation and sequence, all found in this collection of preludes and fugues. In addition, these pieces are short studies: students can mark and highlight these contrapuntal techniques in their scores to assist in their learning of them. These pieces are wonderful pre-baroque contrapuntal studies that can acquaint the student with the contrapuntal style before using any standard baroque literature.

The "Prelude in C Major" features broken chords divided between the hands outlining the tonic, dominant and sub-dominant harmonies. This chord progression is strongly anchored on the tonic note C in the left hand. The pianistic problems found are the shifts in fingering beyond the five finger patterns that occur in the right hand. Additional problems may be evenly matching the tones of the broken chord patterns and executing the legato pedaling suggested by the composer. The playing of the prelude may be more fluid and comfortable if a slight rotation is used for the wrists.

Allegretto

Example: "Prelude in C Major."



The “Fugue in C Major” contains several inversions of the original subject and answer, as noted by Rowley, and a few that he does not mark (measures 6 and 17), and the initial fugue, which appears in the left hand, is a *real* answer. Some students will be challenged by the shifts in hand position for each fugal entry, and additional challenges might involve the closeness in proximity of the hands as well as the coordination of the two independent melodic lines. This prelude and fugue offers the student their favorite key will providing them with solid technical and musical challenges.

The “Prelude in D Minor” (II) features repeated thirds in the left hand supporting a sequentially structured melody in the right hand. Both parts ascend and then descend by step, and an underlying harmonic progression moves one chord per measure. The student will be challenged by the solid execution of chord tones in the left hand and balance between the melody and accompaniment. Musically, the student has the opportunity to shape the sequential patterns, as Rowley suggests with crescendo and diminuendo markings.

The “Fugue in D Minor” features a subject, answer, which is a *real* answer, subject in augmentation and stretto. The subject, which is two measures in length, makes its appearance in the left hand. Challenges for the student will involve the finger crossings, which occur in both hands. Additional challenges will be the close proximity of the hands.



Example: “Fugue in C Major.”



Example: “Prelude in D Minor.”



Example: “Fugue in D Minor.”



The “Prelude in C Major” (III) in based upon a five-note ascending motive (five-finger pattern) on C, and is followed by the left-hand entrance on G. An interlude of four bars featuring broken chord patterns allows for the return of the opening motive again to finally close the piece. Challenges for the student may be the clarity and articulation of the eighth-note motives and coordination of the hands in the contrary-motion broken chord patterns.

The “Fugue in C Major” also presents the subject in the left hand and features the subject, answer and strett. The fugue answer is *real*. This fugue is more linear than the previous fugues thus far, and the main challenge for the student are the numerous finger crossings that abound in the score. This fugue is a valuable study on and for finger crossings as they are a regular part of our scale playing and will be found in all genres of piano literature.

The “Prelude in A Minor” (IV) features a sustained right hand melodic line, in the upper fingers, accompanied by repeated notes beneath the melody in the left hand. The repeated note pattern is varied with a stressed upper neighbor tone under the melody. The main challenge for the student, and an excellent opportunity as well, is to manage the balance of melody and the repeated-note pattern all in one hand. This prelude, in particular, is more étude-like than the other preludes thus far.

**Allegretto**

Example: “Prelude in C Major.”



**Allegretto**

Example: “Fugue in C Major.”



**Andante**

Example: “Prelude in A Minor.”





The "Fugue in A Minor" features the subject in the right hand, the first fugue to do so, and continues with answer, and stretto. The answer is *real*. Challenges for the student might be the articulation of staccato notes, rests in the left hand and the close proximity of the hands.

The "Prelude in F Major" (V) features a lilting melody framed in a 3/8 meter supported by a ground bass in the left hand. The four-measure ground bass features the tonic, dominant and sub-median chords. The five-finger pattern that opens the prelude shifts out of position and moves to a new location, one octave higher. Students may be challenged by the legato chord-playing in the left hand and the shifts in register of the right hand.

The "Fugue in F Major" is the only fugue that Rowley marks in a sub-titled manner as "a la gigue," and the fugue is also cast in a 3/8 meter. Rowley pulls out all the stops with contrapuntal techniques in this last fugue: subject, answer, complete stretti, and the subject inverted and in stretti. The answer is *real*. Primary technical challenges are the finger crossings and the independence of the hands in passages exhibiting contrary motion.



Example: "Fugue in A Minor."



Example: "Prelude in F Major."



Example: "Fugue in F Major."



It is not necessary for students to complete the entire collection; however, it would be beneficial if they did, since so many contrapuntal techniques are explored. Each prelude and fugue offers a variety of challenges and opportunities for musical shaping and phrasing. This collection is a welcomed addition to the pre-contrapuntal repertoire.

The *Études in Tonality, Op. 44*, was published by CF Peters in 1937. It is intended for the late-intermediate to early-advanced pianist and features eight pieces based on 20th-century idioms: "Prologue," "Modal," "Pentatonic," "Diatonic," "Chromatic," "Whole Tone," "Polytone" and "Atonal." The student will enjoy the diversity of 20th-century sounds ranging from the mild romantic and jazz harmonies found in "Prologue," "Modal" and "Pentatonic," to the more austere, dissonant sounds commonly associated with contemporary music in "Chromatic," "Whole-Tone," "Polytone" and "Atonal." "Diatonic" could be considered a happy medium between the two by virtue of its traditional harmonic background and its sparse texture. Most of the pieces in this collection are cast in ternary form, thus the repetition of material makes these pieces easy to learn quickly. The pieces in this collection fit well in the hand and focus not only on the concept of a tonality, but a technical and musical aspect as well. This collection, one of a rarity available today for piano teachers, offers the opportunity for the student to explore these tonalities in the setting of an étude.

"Prologue" was written for and dedicated to Rowley's friend and duo-partner, Edgar Moy. Of the eight pieces in this collection, "Prologue" is the only piece whose title does not specify a tonality. Rowley successfully imitates a jazz style through the subtle use of seventh chords resulting in a lush sonorous texture. For this reason, "Prologue" would make a good piece to introduce the concept of a jazz sound to students without the complicating jazz rhythms that might be associated with it. The repetitious nature of material and the concise formal design of "Prologue" aide students in learning it quickly. The ternary form is characterized by chord clusters comprised of intervals of seconds and thirds in the right hand in Section A. The left hand is cast in a jump-style bass, which is really the glue of the piece: Rowley cleverly constructs a chord progression that seamlessly unites the hands. Section B features a more distinct melodic line and a chain of unresolved seventh chords: even though planned, this progression seems to wander in and out of different keys until the return of Section A. The piece sounds good and looks more difficult than it is. The pianistic problems found in "Prologue" are executing the chord clusters solidly in the right hand and negotiating the leaps in the left hand. This is a wonderful entry-level piece to introduce a student to the concept of contemporary jazz sounds.

Alec Rowley, Opus 44

Allegretto (♩ = 72)

Example: "Prologue."





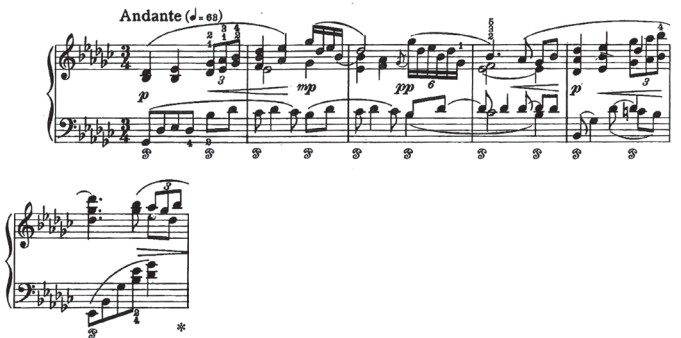
"Modal" features the B-aeolian scale. The clear, linear nature of the scale and arpeggio work in this étude seems austere in comparison to the lush, rich harmonic texture of "Prologue." "Modal" requires a proficient scale technique to do justice to the piece, and this piece is also a great showcase for a student who has a good command of scale technique. The left hand provides a broken chord accompaniment that ascends and descends the B Aeolian scale in stepwise motion that supports the scale pattern in the right hand. A strong reference to the E Mixolydian tonality if featured in Section B. The arpeggiated patterns in the right hand and broken chord patterns in the left hand emphasize a dominant-to-tonic chord progression feel. The pianistic challenges are playing the scales fluidly and articulately and moving quickly to new hand positions in Section B. Students will love this piece because it sounds fast and impressive while it works on their scale technique. Teachers can benefit from using "Modal" as a study piece to introduce and/or reinforce the concept of modes, and of course, to reinforce a good scale technique.



Example: "Modal."



"Pentatonic" explores the pentatonic scale on the black keys. A lush and thick sound is achieved through the frequent use of seventh and ninth chords. "Pentatonic" is similar to "Prologue" with respect to the rich chordal texture and subtle use of jazz harmonies. Students who learn and play "Pentatonic" will gain a better tactile sense of negotiating on the black keys. It is succinct in form, comprising only two pages. Students will be challenged by the rhythm pattern



Example: "Pentatonic."



of two (eighth notes) against three (triplets), which occurs in the first measure and is executed between the hands. Later, Rowley employs the same rhythm but this time for the right hand alone. Other challenges for the student will be the large stretches found in the chords in the left hand and the simultaneous execution of all chord tones in the large chords. The sound of this étude is inviting for the students: it sounds lush, romantic, yet somewhat jazzy as well.

"Diatonic" might be, in the student's eyes, the ideal piece to study because it is based only on the white keys and the absence of any accidentals may suggest that it will be easy to play. "Diatonic," however, is a perpetual motion study, and may prove challenging for some students because of the continuous scale patterns in the right hand that require a well-developed scale technique to execute cleanly. For the first time in this collection, Rowley departs from using the ternary form and instead resorts to a through-composed form. The left hand provides a drone bass throughout while the right hand is very busy playing scales. Challenges are playing the scale patterns fluidly and effortlessly moving to a new location to initiate the next scale pattern. "Diatonic" may make an effective piece for an opening a recital, or a closing piece as well—a sort of programmed encore.



Example: "Diatonic."



The last four pieces in this collection, "Chromatic," "Whole Tone," "Polytone" and "Atonal," reflect a new kid of sound that is initiated in "Chromatic." Characteristic of these pieces are the dissonant harmonies, the abandonment of traditional harmonic functions, the highly chromatic texture, and the lack of a central, or home key. "Chromatic" is a study exploring chromaticism within the key of F major. The character of "Chromatic" suggests a waltz, which is achieved by the lilting melody cast in triple meter accompanied by a jump base. The student will be challenged by playing a significant amount of chromatic scales primarily in the right hand. Rowley constructs the scale patterns in two measure phrases, ascending and descending. Despite the chromatic nature of the right hand, the left hand jump base features seventh chords. Section B still retains the chromatic nature of the piece but now features chord patterns infused with chromatic scales. The student may be challenged to execute all chromatic patterns cleanly, especially when the passages appear in chordal combinations. Negotiating large chords, rapid chord changes, and chromatic scales in the left hand may provide additional challenges. "Chromatic" requires adept fingers, but also more musicianship on the part of the student, especially with respect to discerning where the phrases are and making the most of them.



Example: "Chromatic."



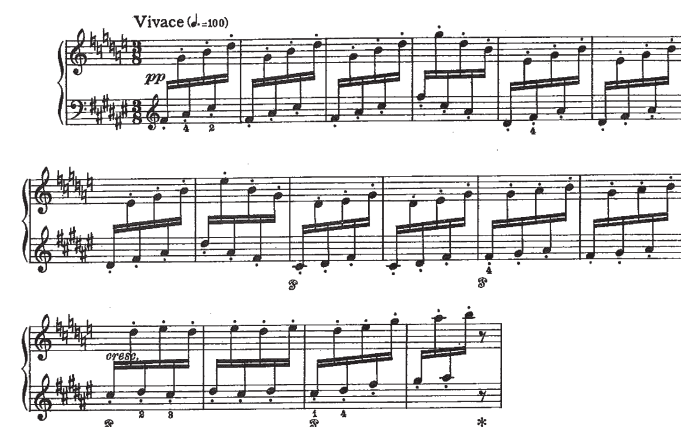
## The Best Of The British

The dissonant sound of “Whole Tones” is even more austere than “Chromatic” and “Polytone.” Rowley strictly adheres to the concept of whole tone construction throughout the étude. An interesting feature of “Whole Tones” is the presence of a traditional four-bar phrase structure that is divided into two-bar, sub-phrases. With only a few measures that deviate from this plan, the phrase structure helps to unify the material. Interestingly, while the right hand, cast in double thirds, is whole tones, the left hand features augmented broken chord patterns. “Whole Tones” poses very few technical challenges for the student. Musically, the student, with the teacher’s help, will need to focus on defining the phrases and shaping to the focal point of each phrase. “Polytone” challenges the student and listener aurally with the constant exchange between two different keys. The left hand is in F-sharp major and the right hand is in G major. Despite this two-key sound, the student will find “Polytone” easy to learn because of the repetition of material. “Polytone” lies well in the hand because the broken chord patterns in each hand generally outline a five-finger pattern. Interspersed are white key scales in the right hand over the black keys in the left hand. A few measures are devoted to groupings of two-note slurs in both hands, and another few measures of semi-chord clusters of intervals of seconds. The only challenge for the student will be to play the alternating broken chord patterns in each hand smoothly and evenly.

“Atonal,” the final piece of this collection, provides an unusual close to the set. The highly abstract and dissonant sound is far removed from the lush harmonies found in “Prologue” that opened this set. In fact, the final chords of “Atonal” leave the listener hanging, hoping either for a tonal resolution, or for another piece to follow in a definite key. The negation of a tonal center in



Example: “Whole Tones.”



Example: “Polytone.”



Example: “Atonal.”



"Atonal" is maintained throughout by the use of seconds, tri-tones, fourths, fifths and sevenths within a linear two-part texture, all establishing an atonal sound. A traditional four-bar phrase structure with two sub-bar phrases is employed throughout. This helps the student easily shape the phrases, despite the dissonance and absence of any tonal center. This is the challenge for the student: to show off and shape the phrases. The last four bars feature clusters of seconds, using black keys in the right hand, and white keys in the left hand.

*Polyrhythms, Op. 50*, was published by CF Peters in 1938. It is intended for the later-intermediate to early-advanced piano student and contains seven pieces focusing on specific rhythm patterns: "Canzonetta," "Idylle," "Vignette," "Preamble," "Impromptu-Appassionato," "Nocturne" and "Tango." The rhythm patterns in this collection become progressively more difficult. The first piece in the collection uses a two-against-three pattern,

and the final piece features a difficult pattern of irregular rhythms. The student will enjoy the diversity of styles represented, as well as be challenged by various rhythm patterns in each piece. Rowley has included a Preliminary Table of Exercises for the student, which shows the rhythm pattern for each piece. These exercises may be transposed to any key.

"Canzonetta" opens the collection with a rhythm pattern of two in the right hand (2/4) and three in the left hand (6/8). It is an appealing piece by virtue of its lyrical melody and rich harmonies. The repetitious nature of material presented in "Canzonetta," along with its clear ternary plan permits ease in learning. While the piece is cast in the key of D major, Rowley changes keys abruptly throughout: to F major, A minor, A-flat major, G major and then eventually back to the home key of D major. The challenge for the student is to master and perfect the rhythm of two against three. While this rhythm pattern is used primarily in the left hand, Rowley deviates briefly for four measures and switches the pattern to the right hand. The main feature of "Canzonetta," beyond the rhythm patterns, is the lyrical melodic line: students will need to listen carefully to balance melody and accompaniment and to produce a singing tonal quality in the right hand.

#### Zwei Noten gegen drei / Two notes against three



#### Drei Noten gegen zwei / Three notes against two



Example: Preliminary Exercises.

Alec Rowley, Op. 50

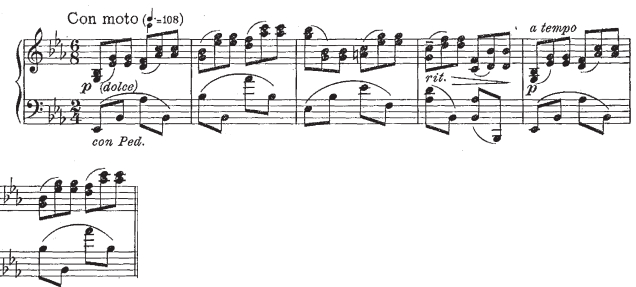
Moderato (♩. = 92)

Example: "Canzonetta."



"Idylle" compliments "Canzonetta" by reversing the same rhythm pattern, so that three (6/8) is in the right hand, and two (2/4) is in the left hand. "Idylle" is appealing because of its quaint, pastoral character, and richly romantic chordal texture and it teases the listener with numerous abrupt key changes. The home key, E-flat major, is surrounded by key changes to D major, C major, C-flat major and A major. Characteristic of "Idylle" are the chord patterns generally found in the right hand, ascending and descending over a single line bass in the left hand. Like "Canzonetta," the meter changes hands in a few brief measures: 2/4 in the right hand, and 6/8 in the left hand. Challenges for the student will be the rhythm combined with execution of large chords in the left hand and simultaneous execution of the chord patterns in the right hand. Students with small hands may roll the chords in the left hand for greater ease of execution.

"Vignette" will delight the listener with light, delicate, pleasing sounds. Rowley captures the essence of the term "Vignette," which can mean a short, evocative description and/or impression of a moment or a character, through the use of left-hand ostinato patterns, and repetitive chords in inversions in the right hand. "Vignette" phrases taper gradually through the use of dynamic markings coupled with ritardando markings. The rhythm pattern for this étude features 6/8 in the right hand and 3/4 in the left hand. Like many of his other pieces in this collection, Rowley weaves in and out of various keys: starting in E major, he shifts to E minor, back to E major, G major, B major and then home again to E major. The student will be challenged not only with the rhythm pattern, but maneuvering the quickly changing first and second inversion chords in the right hand. These chords will require appropriate fingering and flexible wrists for easier negotiation.



Example: "Idylle."



Example: "Vignette."



Of all the études in this collection, "Preamble" is the most étude-like in appearance because it features and focuses solely on scalar passage-work. The scale passages feature twists and turns throughout, and for this reason, "Preamble" could be considered a good replacement for a Czerny study. "Preamble" is the first piece in this collection to break from the style found in the preceding three pieces: the lush chordal textures found in the earlier études are replaced by a linear framework featuring endless scale passages. Written in G major, "Preamble" concentrates on six in the left hand (6/4) and 12 in the right hand (12/8). While a solid scale technique is a prerequisite to playing "Preamble," this étude will also help a student who is maybe not so proficient with their scale technique. For students who have fleet fingers and scale-patterns under their belt, this piece can only reinforce and highlight their technical gifts, thus, "Preamble" is a wonderful piece to slip in the student's repertoire.

Students will enjoy the bravura sound and style of "Impromptu-Appassionato." The rapid exchange of broken chords in each hand, as well as the scale and octave passages, create a brilliant, flashy work that could motivate students. Written in F minor, the rhythm pattern challenging the student is three in the right hand (6/8, triplets), and four in the left hand (2/4, sixteenth notes). Similar to previous études, "Impromptu-Appassionato" features several keys changes: A-flat major, C minor, E-flat major, E-flat minor and even, in one instance, the use of the F Lydian scale. The student will be challenged by the large broken-chord patterns in the left hand, as well as the octave stretches in the right hand. Because of the repetitive nature of "Impromptu-Appassionato," it is easy to learn and it makes any student sound quite impressive.



Example: "Preamble."



Example: "Impromptu-Appassionato."





Rowley's "Nocturne" retains the languid, sometimes wistful melodic lines, and broken chord accompaniment patterns that are characteristic of the Chopin Nocturnes. The contemporary harmonies, however, truly distinguish Rowley's nocturne from Chopin's. Characteristic of Chopin's nocturnes are the passages of contrasting rhythm patterns, such as four against three and eight against three in Op. 9, No. 2. Rowley's "Nocturne" in E-flat major features the contrasting rhythm

pattern of five against three. Two meters are given for each hand, 2/4 and 5/8 and change several times throughout the étude. Initially, Rowley begins with five in the right hand, but at several points throughout the piece, he switches five from the right hand to the left hand. This is a great challenge for any pianist. In addition, a mini-cadenza asserts a new rhythm pattern of 2/4 in each hand: the rhythmic grouping in the right hand is five, against three in the left hand. This occurs twice in the étude. The sound of this étude is captivating and certainly fastens upon the style and sound of the nocturnes by Chopin. This étude would make a fine addition to the student's repertoire, especially to augment the nocturne style and background for the student. This is, by far, one of the most challenging études with respect to the rhythm pattern. Other considerations that may challenge the student will be two-note slurs within a five-note rhythmic grouping.

The seventh and final piece, "Tango," provide a lively conclusion to this collection. Rowley seems to imply that "Tango" is the culmination of *Polyrhythms* in that it features a variety of irregular rhythm patterns in a through-composed form. The Spanish flavor of "Tango" is portrayed by the rhythm pattern in the left hand, which is the same pattern that Rowley used in "Spanish Dances" from the *Marionettes* collection. Written in F

major, "Tango" opens with 6/8 in the right hand and 2/4 in the left hand. There are, however, frequent meters changes scattered throughout the piece. For example, 9/8 in the right hand and 3/4 in the left hand, and toward the conclusion of the piece, the meters changes from 3/4 to 2/4 twice. "Tango" also features irregular rhythms of two against three, seven against two, five against two and nine against two. The melody of "Tango" is embedded in the right hand thumb, which makes for easy voicing. Rowley again explores different keys such as A-flat major, E-flat major and C major. The flavor of the "Tango" is enhanced with many cadenza-like passages, mainly runs that add a considerable flavor and flair to the piece. Rowley's gesture of and capricious use of melody make this an inviting piece to listen to, and quite frankly, a little



Example: "Nocturne."



Example: "Tango."



provocative as well! “Tango” will challenge the student’s ability to adapt to various changes in rhythm patterns as well as changes of key. Voicing the thumb in the right hand and the solid and simultaneous execution of chords tones in the right hand may be problematic for some students.

Rowley’s music has not been thoroughly explored nor taught much by piano teachers today. The wealth of his music and excellent craftsmanship make them worthy of serious consideration. His music, whether it be solo piano music, or even piano duets, provides piano teachers and students alike with a resource of excellent teaching pieces for all ages and levels. Rowley’s music deserves a place in our teaching libraries and in our student’s repertoire. ◀◀

## Notes

1. Some of Rowley’s piano music can be accessed on the IMSLP (Pretrucci) website. Most of his piano collections may be ordered through any music dealer, or dealing directly with the publishing company.

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5. Gibbon, L.D., ed. *The Music Trader’s Guide to Works by Twentieth-Century British Composers up to 1955*. London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1956.

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7. Hinson, Maurice. *Guide to the Pianist’s Repertoire*, fourth edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.

8. Magrath, Jane. *Pianists’ Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*. California: Alfred Publishing, 1996.

9. Mellers, Wifrid. *Music and Society: England and the European Tradition*. London: Dennis Dobson, Ltd., 1946.

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11. Excerpts from the *Études in Tonality*, Op. 44 and *Polyrhythms*, Op. 50 are used with kind permission from C. F. Peters.

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