The late-Romantic Swedish pianist-composer Wilhelm Stenhammar is largely unfamiliar among the American teachers and students of classical music. Stenhammar’s compositions did not reach the same international acclaim as those of other Scandinavian nationalists, such as Edvard Grieg. The primary reason for this difference is due to the historical events within the countries. Stenhammar’s style also differs from the strong nationalistic sound of Grieg in that he did not overtly employ folk music elements but, instead, based his works on German classical traditions, decorated with Scandinavian music features. Folk elements found in Stenhammar’s music include traditional Swedish polska dance rhythms, melodies composed in modes common to Scandinavian music and troll-like characteristics similar to those heard in Grieg’s Lyric Pieces.

Stenhammar’s Sensommarnätter (“Late Summer Nights”), Op. 33 is a set of five character pieces that offer valuable lessons for advanced students. They are comparable to the levels of Brahms’ Klavierstücke, Opp. 118 and 119 and Grieg’s Lyric Pieces, and they demonstrate Stenhammar’s unique harmonic language, virtuosic writing and a mature, reflective style. This set involves careful voicing in contrapuntal textures, balance and dynamic control, pedaling in thick textures and lower registers, and a high level of technical facility.

Shelby Nord, NCTM, is a graduate teaching assistant in the DMA piano pedagogy program at the University of South Carolina. Her research focuses on the piano music of Nordic composers, primarily of Swedish descent.
Wilhelm Stenhammar’s *Sensommarnätter*, Op. 33: Rediscovered Swedish Character Pieces
Shelby Nord

**Stenhammar (1871-1927)**

**Background**
- Born in Stockholm, Sweden
- Concert pianist, composer, and conductor

**Style**
German Classical foundation decorated with Swedish and Scandinavian music features

**Piano Works**
Five sonatas, two piano concerti, and several character piece sets

**Contribution**
Mature, reflective, and technically demanding pieces for late-intermediate to advanced students to supplement standard repertoire

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**Sensommarnätter (Late Summer Nights)**
Op. 33 as Teaching Pieces

**Composition**
- Published during his mature period in 1914
- Title reference to the dark evenings at the end of Sweden’s short summers, and love for the scenic landscape

**Five Character Pieces**
- Well-suited for early- to late-advanced students
- Common musical skills: balance, voicing, and shaping
- Common technical requirements: contrapuntal textures, finger work, parallel octaves
- Uncommon ABAB forms and titles for character pieces

**Available for purchase at:**
https://www.gehrmans.se/butik/instrument-ensemble/sensommarnatter-n06473

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**I. Tranquilo e soave**
Requirements: portraying a mature, serious character; clear voicing and shaping long phrases; four-part counterpoint

**II. Poco presto**
Requirements: voicing four-note chords; maintaining light touch with a loose wrist in quiet dynamic range; sense of forward motion

**III. Piano. Non troppo lento**
Requirements: Impressionistic character of theme and variations; shaping in a quiet dynamic range; voicing soprano and tenor

**IV. Presto agitato**
Requirements: left hand arpeggiation; balance; evenness and clarity of the running notes; rapid arpeggios in contrary motion; dynamic range

**V. Poco allegretto**
Requirements: voicing and balance; folk character; variety of articulations and phrase markings; light left-hand with jumps; most accessible of the set