

“Extending” The Boundaries of Piano Pedagogy: Teaching Extended Techniques in the Music of Emma Lou Diemer

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Background on the Composer:

- Born November 24, 1927 in Kansas City, Missouri
- Grew up in a musical family
 - Two brothers and one sister
 - Sister was poet Dorothy Diemer Hendry
- Began composing at the age of four
- Taught by rote initially, she was an avid improviser, which helped her to begin composing
- By the age of 12 or 13, Diemer knew she wanted to be a composer
- She was Professor of Theory and Composition at University of Maryland 1965-1970
- On the faculty at University of California Santa Barbara 1971-1991

Teachers:

- Her first teacher was Mabel Payton
 - Mrs. Payton taught Diemer the fundamentals of piano such as hand position and relaxation at the piano
 - taught Diemer by rote
 - wrote down her compositions
- Victor Labunski
 - Director of the Kansas City Conservatory at the time he was teaching Diemer
- William Gant taught her at Yale
 - taught her to find the soul of the music, helped her with expression
- Bernard Rogers and Howard Hanson taught her at Eastman
 - Hanson was very interested in harmony
 - would have his students complete compositional exercises where they would frequently change keys
 - This influenced Diemer’s style of key relations in her music

How Amanda’s interest in Emma Lou’s music began, and their relationship:

- I studied Diemer’s *Toccata for Piano* in 2011, at the original suggestion of my undergraduate teacher, Elisabeth Pridonoff
- I decided (with my graduate school professor, Doris Lehnert) to interview Diemer for a possible lecture recital project
- I met Diemer in Santa Barbara in November 2011 and recorded our interviews
- I turned our interviews into my lecture recital in December of 2011
 - “Extended Keyboard Techniques and Compositional Philosophy: a Conversation with Emma Lou Diemer”
- My lectures can be found on my YouTube channel: search for me by name, Amanda Setlik Wilson

- Commissioned a piece by Diemer, completed in 2012: *Toccata for Amanda: Homage to the Minimalists and Antonio Vivaldi*
- I then commissioned a second piece for the 2017 International Convention of Mu Phi Epsilon: *Variations on "Our Triangle"*

Appeal of Emma Lou Diemer's Music from a Performer's Perspective:

- Appeals to those with rebellious spirits
- New compositional ideas
- Strengthens improvisational skills
- Fun to play and explore different sounds of the instrument
- Explores creative ways of playing the piano
- Compels the listener to think about music in different ways
- Humor

Benefits to teaching Diemer's music:

- Opens the ears of budding classical musicians
- Inspiring students who are interested in composition or may be in the future
- Add interest to the repertoire of struggling students
- Appeal to musically adventurous students
- Helps keep students open to different styles of music in the future
- Improves my own understanding and performance level

Intermediate Repertoire:

- *Time Pictures: Four Studies in Time* - 1961
 - Boosey & Hawkes, 1961 (Reprinted 1983)
- *Sound Pictures* - 1971
 - Boosey & Hawkes, 1971 (Reprinted 1983)
- *Space Suite - 12 Short Pieces* - 1988
 - Plymouth Music Co., Inc., 1989
- *Minimalisting* - 2010
 - from "Contemporary Collage - Music of the 21st Century", Vol. 1, Book 3
- *Thinking Back* - 2010
 - also from "Contemporary Collage"

Advanced Repertoire:

- *Seven Etudes* - 1965
 - Carl Fischer, Inc. 1965
 - Written for Stewart Gordon
 - Etudes dedicated to composers such as Rachmaninoff and Schoenberg
- *Toccata for Piano* - 1979
 - Sistra Publications/Arsis Press, 1980
 - Written for senior recital of Nozomi Takahashi, a student at UCSB
- *Sonata No. 3* - 1996-2000
 - Hildegard Publishing Company, 1999-2000
 - Written for Carol Dvoran-Lancaster
- *Psalms* - 2003
 - Lauren Keiser Music Publishing, 2013
- *Toccata for Amanda: Homage to the Minimalists and Antonio Vivaldi* - 2012

- Lauren Keiser Music Publishing, 2016
- [Recording of Toccata for Amanda on YouTube](#)

Helpful Reading Material:

- *Emma Lou Diemer: A Bio-Bibliography* - Ellen Grolman Schlegel, 2001
- *Extended Keyboard Techniques and Compositional Philosophy: A Conversation with Emma Lou Diemer* - Amanda Setlik Wilson, 2011
- *Commissioning Solo Piano Works by Emma Lou Diemer and Anthony Green* - Amanda Setlik Wilson, 2015

Please feel free to contact me for any of the materials mentioned in my presentation, or with any questions you may have! Thank you for attending!

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