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Programme Notes: *La Chapelle* from *Souvenirs du Chateau*, by Eugenie Rocherolle (1936)

Eugenie Rocherolle invites her audience into *La Chapelle*, the family chapel where her daughter was married; the second piece from her *Souvenirs du Chateau* collection completed in 1991, comprising of musical paintings of six rooms in the family chateau. This deeply personal place is introduced by Rocherolle as a place of ‘*reverence and romance*’ and Rocherolle captures this mood beautifully in this Romantic style composition. Rocherolle was introduced to the Romantic composers by her musical parents; as a child she was ‘*smitten with Chopin, Debussy, Grieg, Schumann ...*’ (Rocherolle, 2015).

La Chapelle depicts ‘*reverence*’ in the opening and middle sections, with the accompaniment producing a serene and processional quality, whilst the melody suggests imagery of a bride gliding down the aisle. However, poignant modulations to the minor key reflect undertones of sorrow. The ‘*romance*’ is portrayed by the dramatic broken chord sequences which lead to two passionate climaxes in the middle and near the end of the piece. The regular key and tempo changes reflect the frequent shifts in mood throughout, evoking the turmoil of emotions which may be felt at a wedding. Let this passionate music arouse your imagination and transport you to a place of ‘*reverence and romance*’.

References

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Word Count: 212

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Title: La Chapelle, from Souvenirs du Chateau, Composer: Eugenie Rocherolle (1936)

Introduction

La Chapelle is a Contemporary Romantic piece completed by the American composer, Eugenie Rocherolle, in 1991. I chose this piece because I enjoy playing music which stirs the emotions and awakens imagery. Reading an on-line interview with Rocherolle also drew me to her music. Rocherolle explains that her compositions are developed by “experimentation and improvisation the secure feeling when my ‘ear’ is pleased or in some cases, I am overcome by emotion’ (Rocherolle, cited by Harris, T., 2015). Rocherolle’s introduction to *La Chapelle*, on her family’s estate, as the setting for her daughter’s wedding, a place of ‘*reverence and romance*’, instantly aroused my imagination and my storyline unravelled as I listened to the music.

Piece Analysis

The overall structure of this piece is A, A Development, B, repeated with further key, tempo, melody and accompaniment transitions. Rocherolle shares how she begins her compositions “with the left hand to establish the rhythm and harmony. This inspires the melody.” (Rocherolle, cited by Harris, T., 2015), giving us an understanding of how the piece is constructed and the melodic development.

Section A (Bars 1-8): The piece opens with *adagio*, which for me depicts a bride slowly processing to the altar in time with the left-hand crotchet beat, adhering to the ‘*reverence*’; respect for *La Chapelle* as a place for religious rituals. I can picture an old, simple chapel building adorned with flowers. Pictures reflecting my imagination are printed in Appendix 4. The *legato* melody line sings out over the accompaniment to evoke ‘gliding’ down the aisle,

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portraying the '*romance*' of the scene. I have added slurs and detached notes to the left-hand to contrast depth and lightness to the bass notes, adding texture to the sound.

The key signature starts in A flat major, but straightaway accidentals in the accompaniment signal to the audience that the music portrays happiness and sorrow. In bar 3 the music modulates to the subdominant, voicing the melody in D flat major. In bar 7 the music modulates to B flat minor, and an imperfect cadence leads to a poignant C minor 7th chord in bar 8, followed by right hand *ritenuto* descending crotchets. This sound is heart-rending and suggests to me that the bride has noticed the absence of a recently deceased well-loved person in the congregation, giving a tragic twist to her wedding day.

The second 8 bar section (A Developed) (Bars 9-16) returns to A flat major and the tempo increases to *andante*, as the first musical idea is repeated, with the melody accompanied by broken chords. I can imagine a conversation, perhaps the bride and groom exchanging vows.

In bar 11 the music again modulates to D flat major to continue the bright and lively tone. In bar 15 G flats prepare for the modulation to B flat minor in the next Section. Bar 16 opens with an F major chord before the *accelerando* and *crescendo* descending right-hand scale passage against left hand broken chords takes the music to the dramatic music of Section B.

Legato pedalling with breaks at first and third beats of the bar throughout Section A and A1 enhances the flow of the music.

The Third Section (B) (Bars 17-21) introduces a new theme in the key of B flat minor. The tempo increases further to intensify the outpouring of love between bride and groom, alongside dramatic broken chord sequences ending with 'glittering' accented top notes. The

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pedalling changes to whole bar so as not to interrupt the flow of each sequence and to give greater depth and sonority to the sound.

In Bar 20 the final sequence is enhanced by *ritenuto* and the sound of the final broken chord is interrupted by a diminished 5th interval of G to D flat, taking the music to the first climax of the piece as the couple kiss at the first beat of bar 21. The *poco ritenuto* and perfect cadence between bars 21 and 22, accentuated by an extra pedal 'up/down', prepares for the return to the original melody in D flat major during the Transition bars (22-23).

The fourth section (A1) (Bars 24-29) returns to the style of Section A, which for me depicts the bride and groom processing down the aisle to leave the church. However, the modulation to E flat minor in bar 24, is a development from Section A to add a stronger undertone of 'reverence' to the procession. At bars 28-29 an imperfect cadence to a B flat minor 7th chord followed by a *ritenuto* scalar descent repeats the heart-rending closure to Section A, as the absent loved-one is remembered again.

The fifth section (A1 Dev) (Bars 30-37) opens in E flat major with beautiful chords in the right hand, the first of which is rolled. Pianists can luxuriate in the feeling of pushing fingers deep into the keyboard whilst imagining the sunlight seeping into the church through the open doors.

From Bar 32 I can 'hear' another conversation between the newly-weds whilst they stand outside in the sunshine. At bar 36 a B natural hints the return to a more passionate mood which is established in bar 37 opening with a C major chord, before the *accelerando* and *crescendo* descending passage.

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The sixth section (B1) (Bars 38-42) opens in F minor, returning to the intense passion between the couple. Section B is repeated in style, rhythm, sequences and pedalling, although this time the top right-hand notes of the broken chords are not accented as in the first Section B and therefore should have a 'lighter touch'. I have added extra pedalling to bar 40-41 to accentuate the intensity of the *poco ritenuto*, before the ascent to the final climax in bar 42, as the couple kiss again. Once again this is heralded by interrupting the final sequence with a diminished 5th interval, this time from D to A flat.

Bars 43-46 are a Coda reminiscent of the A1 section returning to A flat via a perfect cadence which signifies the closure of the intense passion. The last four bars return to the melody from A1, with *rallentando* and *decrescendo* leading to the final *piano* chord to inspire imagery of the bride and groom leaving the scene, disappearing into the horizon at the final chord. This A flat major chord is approached via a plagal cadence to give a calm and lingering resolution to the story.

Comparison of two recordings by other artists

I have listened to several recordings of *La Chapelle*, but decided the performances providing me with meaningful analysis were by Peter Wild, used for the Trinity Exam Board CD and Subito Music (performer not acknowledged).

- **Tone:** Wild plays the melody and accompaniment with a light touch achieving very clear voicing, whereas Subito has 'thicker' tone, but voicing between parts not as clear.
- **Pedalling:** It sounds as if Subito is deploying deeper pedalling than Wild, however the overall sound of the pianos can also affect the tone.

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- **Tempo:** Wild keeps to the metronome markings in the score and eases through the tempo transitions to maintain an 'elastic' pulse and the sedate sense of '*reverence*'. However, Subito plays Section A at a slower speed (c. crotchet = 44) which sounds a little laboured. In Section A1 the speed suddenly increases to a much faster speed (c. crotchet = 96) and Section B (c. crotchet = 144). There is too much contrast of tempo between these sections resulting in a loss of the sense of one pulse stretched and pulled back.
- **Articulation:** Wild accents the top notes of the broken chords in Section B to give a 'shining' or 'glittering' sound, whereas this could not be heard as well in the Subito recording, partly due to being played too quickly.
- **Phrasing:** Wild follows the composer's phrasing to add poignancy and emotion to the piece whereas the Subito phrasing is not as clearly 'punctuated' and does not subtly enhance the emotion of the piece.
- **Overall style:** Wild maintains a 'pretty' and 'controlled', precise and musically accomplished, sound throughout, contributing to an emotionally poignant, perhaps 'clinical' performance. Although less musically accomplished, the Subito recording produces a more passionate atmosphere to the music with its wider tempo changes and deeper tone.

Learning Plan

"Musicians will be most successful when they feel mastery over the music they are performing. If they take the stage with excessive concerns about merely executing the technical demands of the performance it is unlikely that they will realise the expressive potential of the music." (Lehmann et al, 2007, p173).

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This quotation has underpinned my learning of this piece as I realised deep, thorough learning was key to a successful performance. I therefore allocated several hours a week to practising, attended two hours of expert tuition alongside PTC tuition and found several opportunities for trial performances on nine different pianos. Reading and Digesting *The Performance* Chapter of *Tuning In* (Mackworth-Young, 2002) also helped to prepare for the performance physically and mentally.

Overall Goal

I have been practising to produce a beautiful flowing sound which adheres to a pulse throughout the tempo changes, to give an emotional performance which inspires the audiences' imagination to transport them to another place.

Brief Learning Plan

Week	Interim Goals	Trial Performances
1	Score analysis - overall structure, themes, modulations	
2	Decide effective fingering	
3	Learn and practise Section A Dev and B	
4	Practice following from Lucinda Mackworth-Young tuition	7/5
5	Learn and practise Section A and A1	13/5
6	Learn and practise A 1 Dev and B1	26/5
7	Improve internalisation of the music and record myself and listen	
8	Practise following Lucinda Mackworth-Young tuition	6/6
9	Video my practise. Further recording and listening – 'feedback loop'	10/6
10	Further 'feedback loop' and trial performances to family and friends	20/6

Refer to Appendix 2 : Interim Goals, Practice Diary Extracts, Trial Performances for detailed documentation of my learning.

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Learning Reflection

Practice Sessions

Whilst learning this piece I have realised the importance of planning practice at the outset and breaking it down into tasks. In hindsight, I would have combined Section A(Dev) with A1(Dev), then Section B with B1 as they share the same themes and require similar pianistic techniques. I followed my practising strategies of Sections, Slow, Separately (Fitch (27.10.18).

I have also used new practice techniques learned at the PTC course, for example practising on a 'silent keyboard' helped me to focus my sense of touch on to the feel of the notes and distances between intervals without the distraction of listening to the sound.

I have always found memorising music difficult, having never been taught strategies to do this. I have practised some of the PTC memorisation techniques, eg quarantine sections, visualise them away from the piano, play on 'air' piano, to learn patterns and can now play some isolated short sections from memory.

I have also tried practising the large 5th finger intervals with my eyes closed to focus on feeling the distance my arm has to travel; "with the visual world unavailable to you, the sensory world inside your body becomes extremely familiar." (Bruser, 1999, p199).

For the first time I have used improvisation to support learning to play technically challenging sequences and to internalise fingering (See Appendix 5).

This is the first time I have recorded and videoed my practice and I now understand that listening to and observing my performance gives an insight into how the music really sounds and how my body is moving, when not concentrating on playing as well.

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My learning of the efficacy of my own practising from watching a 10 minute video clip of myself practising

I felt a little nervous whilst filming, which led to my fingers feeling less secure in parts of the challenging sections, so this experience has helped me to identify areas which are still not 100% secure, which are not always evident in usual practice.

Bars 9-15 and 30-36: I find it difficult to keep to the pulse, as often runaway with emotion of the piece. I wanted to observe myself counting, firstly taking out the accompaniment; count whilst playing the melody line and bass beats 1 and 3 of each bar. When I played the second time with the full accompaniment and continued counting aloud I was able to keep to the pulse, so will continue this practise. I did notice a couple of small hesitations when playing bars 30-36 hands separately, due to fingering, so this practice method also highlights other insecurities.

Bars 16-21 and 37-41: I wanted to observe myself counting aloud the elasticity of the tempo changes hands separately. This highlighted there are still insecurities with the left-hand keeping strictly to the pulse, with very slight delays between the first 2 quaver beats of each bar with the large intervals and not always hitting a note securely here, therefore I will continue this practise at a slower pace. I also noticed that it sounds too abrupt between these large intervals, so I will continue with slower practise, recording and playing back to produce a smoother effect. I will also continue to work on gradually easing in and out of the tempo changes.

I also wanted to observe the lateral movement I have been practising throughout the piece to produce a sound of 'effortless flow'. I couldn't see any unnecessary circular or up/down

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movements and my fingers seemed to have settled into a slighter flatter position to embrace the keys.

I have noticed that I am sitting slightly high at the piano, but the piano stool is temporary until I purchase a new adjustable stool.

Tuition

The two lessons gave me invaluable insight into how to use the body to assist technical challenges, for example to assist playing the broken chord passages securely employ lateral arm movement and push flattened fingertips deep into the keybed to 'feel and hug' the notes. My performance has also been improved by having an expert tutor to reinforce the basics, such as counting and pedalling and to provide a second opinion when deciding how to improve musicality.

Trial Performances

"Performances need to be practised both so that you gain confidence in performing, and so that you become aware of any insecurities" (Mackworth-Young, 2002). The trial performances highlighted many insecurities, giving focus for further practice. Taking myself out of the 'comfort zone' of playing on my own piano on several occasions has given me greater confidence and I gradually felt more 'in control' of the piece when playing on different pianos. I will prepare myself to manage the nerves on the day by 'thinking positively' and following relaxation techniques before the performance, such as stretching and taking deep breaths.

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How I will apply my learning to help pupils prepare for performances

I will give pupils opportunities to listen to/watch other performances during lessons. I will also introduce pieces creatively to help them to use imagery to 'colour' their performance.

The teaching of pulse, rhythm, notation and technical details will be given at a suitable pace for pupils to digest the skills required to ensure rigorous learning of the piece.

I will also introduce improvisation as appropriate to help reinforce challenging passages or accompaniment that may not be practised so well at home.

I will ensure pupils are using their body to support their playing, eg relaxed shoulders seated correctly, appropriate elbow and wrist movement, addressing any signs of tension.

Some pupils can quickly memorise music, but this is often only using muscle memory; I will question pupils about the score to find out how far the music has been internalised and use appropriate memorising strategies as required for those who find memorising more challenging.

I give pupils opportunities to practise performing at termly student concerts and local festivals as well as encouraging them to play in school concerts or to family and friends at home.

Refer to Appendix 6: Exam and Performing Tips, which I compiled, referring to Mackworth-Young PTC Lecture (2019) and Tuning In (2002), to discuss with pupils and parents, at an age appropriate level, before examinations or performances.

Word Count: 2678

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Appendix 1: Score

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APPENDIX 1

La Chapelle

Scene of several family weddings,
including our daughter's in 1982.

Eugénie Rocherolle

Adagio (♩ = 66) **A**

Ab maj *mp* *simile* *Db maj*

Andante (♩ = 80) **A Dev**

Ab maj *mf* *simile* *Db maj* *f*

poco accel. *rit.* *IV* *V*

BB min *(2-5) C 7m*

GP369

B

Moderato (♩=112) 44

15 (4-5) 3 5 3 1 3 2 1 3 2

accel. *f*

18 *simile* *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.* 4 2 1 3

Tempo Primo (♩=66)

21 *poco rit.* *a tempo* Transition *mf* *Db maj* 4 1 2

A1 *simile*

24 *mp* *5* 4 1 5 2 1

28 *poco accel.* *rit.* *Bb 7* 3 5 4 3 2

Andante (♩=80) *mf* *Ab maj* **A1 Dev**

GP369 **IV** **V**

32

simile

36

accel.

f

sf

B1
Moderato (♩ = 112)

39

a tempo

poco rit.

rit.

simile

Ped.

42

Tempo Primo (♩ = 66)

rit.

mf rall. e decresc.

p

Coda A♭ maj

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Appendix 2: Interim Goals, Practice Diary Extracts and Trial Performances

	Interim Goals	Practice Diary Extracts with Practice Strategies
1	<p>Understand overall structure and themes</p> <p>Draft Learning Timetable</p> <p>Score analysis for key signature changes</p>	<p>Listen to recording of the piece and study the musical score. Create my interpretation and storyline</p> <p>Work backwards from assessed performance date, allowing two weeks before performance for consolidating all learning and trial performing; allocate sections to work on each week; arrange lessons and trial performances.</p> <p>Mark up on score</p>
2	Decide effective fingering	Try out fingering patterns hands separately and together and mark up fingering on score, practise hands separately.
3	<p>Section A Dev and B:- Section A Dev:- Correct Voicing of parts</p> <p>Section B:- Play broken chords effortlessly whilst portraying passionate lead to first climax of piece</p> <p>Section A Dev and B Internally visualise sequences and fingering patterns</p>	<p>Push fingers into notes to sing out top line melody. Isolate broken chord accompaniment to focus on internalising the fingering and touch of the broken chord sequences whilst listening to the accompaniment melody.</p> <p>Strengthen right-hand finger to be able to play proficiently crossing under 4th and 3rd fingers (bars 11-16). Practise using Czerny Exercise 146 with distorted rhythm (Appendix 3). Right-hand practice to ensure right-hand thumbs don't hold on to quavers at bottom of broken chords.</p> <p>Strengthen left-hand 5th finger to play large intervals (bars 17-20) comfortably using Czerny Exercise 145 (Appendix 3). Play the intervals moving around the piano and play with eyes shut to focus on feeling the distance between the notes. Use improvisation to internalise key signature, fingering and large intervals (Appendix 5).</p> <p>Memorise sections to focus on touch/sound only - this takes a very long time but helps to internalise repeated sequences and isolate key changes/accidentals.</p>
4	<p>Practice techniques from Lucinda Mackworth-Young tuition (7/5):- Maintain pulse throughout tempo changes</p> <p>Effective pedalling to enhance the flow and depth to the piece</p> <p>Lateral movement (bars 9-15) for fingers to comfortably play stretches to notes</p> <p>Produce firm but quiet tone for the last chord to ensure all notes given equal depth and <i>piano</i></p>	<p>Practise hands separately and count aloud.</p> <p>Focus only on pedalling with left-hand playing.</p> <p>Practise separate hands to swing elbow out to ascend the keyboard and take in the wrist to descend, to add movement to help fingers to stretch the intervals.</p> <p>Slide fingers forward and place on the surface of the keys then push with even weight to all through to bottom of keybed.</p>

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	<p>Add interest/detail to left-hand (bars 1-8 and 24-29)</p> <p>Bars 38-41 and 17-20</p>	<p>Push off notes to finish slurs and at detached chords.</p> <p>Change fingering to crossing over fingers to avoid large interval 5th finger leaps.</p>
5	<p>Section A and A1:- Voicing – top line melody</p> <p>Accompaniment</p>	<p>Use armweight to push in right-hand fingers to hear top line melody.</p> <p>Left-hand memorise fingering to produce a steady underlying pulse for the crotchet beats and practise slurs and staccato notes to add depth and interest to the accompaniment.</p>
6	<p>Section A 1 Dev and B1:-</p> <p>Bars 30-31 – strong right-hand chords – to produce ‘dreamy’ romantic sound and represent sunlight glittering in through the church doors for the rolled chord and out in the full sunshine for subsequent chords</p>	<p>Continue following strategies for Section A and A Dev.</p> <p>Slow practise using armweight to push fingers into notes with equal weight to roll the first chord and play subsequent chords with even weight, whilst swinging out right-hand elbow to ease fingers into the notes.</p> <p>Internalise the right-hand thumb lifting off tied E flat to play same note in the left hand to secure the flow of the music.</p>
7	<p>Improve internalisation of the music</p> <p>Learning through self-evaluation Record myself and listen</p>	<p>Spend time away from piano visualising notation and patterns. Play on silent keyboard.</p> <p>Dynamic range not as full as I thought in Sections A and A1 and accompanying notes could be a little quieter.</p> <p>Section Bs – not yet flowing, greater security required - push fingers deeper into keys to improve flow.</p> <p>Not strictly adhering to rhythm in Sections A1 and B – slow down the tempo and continue to count aloud during practice.</p>
8	<p>Practice techniques from Lucinda Mackworth-Young tuition (3/6):- Further technical skills added to enhance security and sound of Section Bs</p> <p>Bars 17-18 – to follow phrasing and improve dramatic effect</p>	<p>To ease difficulty playing these broken chord passages with large intervals return to fingering in the score. Push a flattened 4th finger deep into the notes to ensure security for the weaker finger and connect each note to the keybed with flattened fingers using lateral arm/wrist movement to assist reaching the notes. Hug the notes to feel comfortable and secure playing them.</p> <p>Check there is no tension in shoulder/forearm to counter this feeling of ease. Right-hand release top accented notes quickly for ‘glittering’ sound.</p> <p>Slow separate hand practice required to ensure left-hand end of phrases is punctuated with a push off before right-hand phrase is punctuated half a beat later. Ensure 4th and 5th fingers are close together to support the 5th finger.</p>

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	Bars 19-20 and 40-41 - pedalling technique to enhance passionate rise to the climax 'Firm, warm, elastic' counting aloud throughout tempo changes	Add extra pedalling (as marked on score) to enhance the clarity of the notes during the <i>ritenuto</i> and closure of the section. Continue to practise whilst counting aloud to secure strong rhythm.
9	Video my practise:- Counting aloud hands separately Observe lateral arm movement Further recording and listening	Deviations from pulse noted. There does not appear to be any unnecessary circular hand movement. 5 th fingers sounding too over-accented in A Dev and A1 Dev sections worked on with Czerny exercises, work on a smooth melody line, which sparkles at the start of phrases.
10	Final internalisation and consolidation	Continue practice - record myself and listen and perform to family and friends.

Dates	Timetable for trial performances on different pianos
13/5	Piano of another PTC student.
26/5	PTC Course – played on 3 different pianos. Did not feel comfortable performing and realised I did not know pieces well enough. The new fingering for Section B/B1 was not working.
6/6	Two Pianos of other PTC students. I was able to play Section B/B1 comfortably and performance felt more secure.
10/6	Grand Piano at a piano teacher's studio with other PTC students.
w/c 17/6	Practice on grand piano at local church
20/6	Performance practise on grand piano at church with other PTC students
22/6	Final assessed performance

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Appendix 3: Czerny Exercises

Practised to increase strength of 5th fingers.

No. 145 : Left-hand practise

No. 146: Right hand practise

Distorted rhythm counted: 1, 2 and a; 1 and a 2; with the full beat on the 5th finger.

145. *Molto allegro*

Edition Peters 6993

146. *Allegro*

Edition Peters 6993

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Appendix 4: Pictures to inspire imagery



This simple, stone interior, elegantly decorated, reminds me of the setting I had imagined.



The sunlight captured by the music can be seen reflecting off the building in the top right-hand corner of the picture on the left.

The picture on the right resembles the image I had in mind of the exterior of an old, stone chapel in the grounds of a family estate.

These pictures are not from the Rocherolle chapel.

Appendix 5

This is an 8 bar example to show how I have been improvising within B flat minor to using broken chord and fingering sequences from Section B to support my learning of this challenging section. Improvisation can be developed by playing in different octaves, changing the rhythms and the sequences, whilst keeping to the B flat minor key signature.

Improvisation in B flat Minor

The image displays a handwritten musical score for an 8-bar improvisation in B-flat minor. The notation is written on two staves, with the treble staff on top and the bass staff on the bottom. The key signature is B-flat minor, indicated by two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and the common time signature 'C'. The time signature is 4/4. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines. Above the treble staff, there are handwritten fingering numbers: 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 5 for the first four bars, and 5 3 2 1 for the fifth bar. Below the bass staff, there are handwritten fingering numbers: 5 2 1 2 3 4 3 2 for the first bar, 1 2 3 4 3 2 for the second bar, 1 2 3 4 3 2 4 3 1 2 for the third bar, and 5 4 2 1 2 4 5 for the fourth bar. The notation is handwritten and appears to be a student's work.

Appendix 6

Examination and Performing Tips

Feeling nervous is normal and there is no magic trick to stop nerves. Nerves may give you butterflies in your stomach or shaking hands.

The following tips can help you to address exam/performing nerves and help you to give a confident performance.

Just Before the Exam/Performance

- Drink water or apple juice and eat a banana an hour before the exam.
- Movement helps to create endorphins – stretch, exercise.
- Ensure your hands are warm and dry – keep them moving before you go in – stretching and squashing and exercise fingers.
- A run through of pieces/scales before going to Exam/Concert at home or with Christine is preferable, if not arrive in plenty of time for a warm up at the Centre.
- Practise ‘positive feelings’ :-
 - ‘I am going to entertain the Examiner/Audience – they will enjoy listening to me.’
 - ‘Now it is time to reap the rewards for all my hard work’
 - ‘I know my repertoire really well, so I don’t have to worry about lack of practise letting me down – now it’s time to ‘show off’ how well I can play’.
- If there are any parts of the music you do not feel secure – don’t focus on them as this will allow ‘negativity and panic to creep in’.
- Spend a minute breathing deeply whilst picturing the music you’re going to play in your head just before you go in to the Exam room/Concert Hall.

During Exam/Performance

- Project ‘positive feelings’ - by smiling, speaking up if Examiner talks to you, not rushing – this will transfer positivity to the Examiner/Audience and they will feel that you are confident, which sets you off on a good start.
- Before you start playing, make sure you are sitting comfortably – adjust the piano stool to the correct height, ask the Examiner if you need help, find the pedal if you need it.
- Posture – ensure you are sitting up straight, with feet flat on the floor in front of you.
- Take your time before you start playing a piece – count yourself in and listen to first bar in your head to make sure you start at the correct speed and volume.
- Be prepared for mistakes to occur due to exam nerves – don’t stop, keep going and stay calm. It is common for mistakes to occur and examiners/audience will be ‘willing you on’ to remain focused and continue playing beautifully.
- Remember – the Examiner/Audience are ‘on your side’ – they are not there to ‘catch you out’ – they want you to do well and will do all they can to support you – eg by making you feel comfortable, ensuring you know what to do. You can ask Examiner questions to clarify any instructions you are unsure of.
- Try not to think whilst you are playing – concentrate on what you are playing and where you are at that moment – if you start think ‘this is going well’ or worry about what’s happening next you are more likely to make a mistake, as those thoughts will interrupt your flow.