

EXPLORING THE REPERTOIRE

Piano Grades 3-5

Frances Wilson



Frances Wilson introduces the 2021-2023 Piano syllabus for Grades 3 to 5 and explores some of her favourite repertoire.

Trinity's 2021-2023 Piano syllabus offers both a balanced teaching curriculum and a wide range of repertoire, from Renaissance to contemporary, and the commissioning of new works through the Young Composers' Competition has produced brand new music to explore.

As teachers, we really appreciate the importance of finding pieces that will encourage students to practise, and – more importantly – enjoy their practising, and also foster a love of music. Variety is key here, and Trinity has succeeded in creating a syllabus with a broad appeal but which also addresses the appropriate technical and artistic issues for each grade. And with so many adults taking up the piano, there is also a need to offer repertoire, especially in the early and intermediate grades, which suits their musical tastes.

In addition to providing an overview of music history, the inclusion of newly commissioned music is an important reminder that composers are still alive and working today, and their contribution to the repertoire is significant. There is also a good quota of pieces by women composers, including Fanny Hensel (sister of Felix Mendelssohn), Amy Beach and Madeleine Dring, as well as contemporary composers Pam Wedgwood and Nikki Iles, both of whom write popular, accessible music for piano students.

In each grade, the syllabus addresses the needs of the less confident and the more ambitious student, and those in between, as well as the inclusion of music to suit the tastes of teenagers and adults, who don't necessarily want to play music that is too 'kid-oriented'. For example, at Grade 3, adult students may well enjoy pieces such as 'Andante' (Haydn) and 'Ballad' (Tadman-Robins); at Grade 4 'Étude' (Lemoine) or 'Remembrance' (Mifsud); and at Grade 5 'Süße Traumerei' (Tchaikovsky) or 'Large Wave' (Wedgwood). Meanwhile, there is no shortage of pieces to delight the younger student, from 'nDcvr Agnt' (Lynch, Grade 3) to 'Calypso' (Knowles, Grade 4) and 'Settle Down' (Goodwin, Grade 5). All of the pieces offer scope to harness the imagination to bring the music to life in performance – and examiners certainly enjoy hearing pieces which are played with character!

These intermediate grades (Grades 3-5) serve as an important bridge in students' musical development. By Grade 3, students should be: confident in playing hands together, with more involved hand independence and awareness of keyboard geography; proficient in note reading; have some technical facility (including *staccato*, *legato*, scale and arpeggio figures); an ability to play with expression; and some musical knowledge. By Grade 5, students should be able to demonstrate good command of the instrument

with confident technical facility; secure reading skills; good musical knowledge; and perform their pieces with some independent artistic, stylistic and interpretative choices. What is particularly satisfying about the Trinity repertoire, from the point of view of both teacher and student, is that all of these aspects are fully addressed within the context of music that is appealing, attractive and accessible to players of all ages, and which encompasses a broad range of musical styles and genres, from mainstream classical music to jazz, rock 'n' roll and contemporary piano music.

My picks from the new syllabus

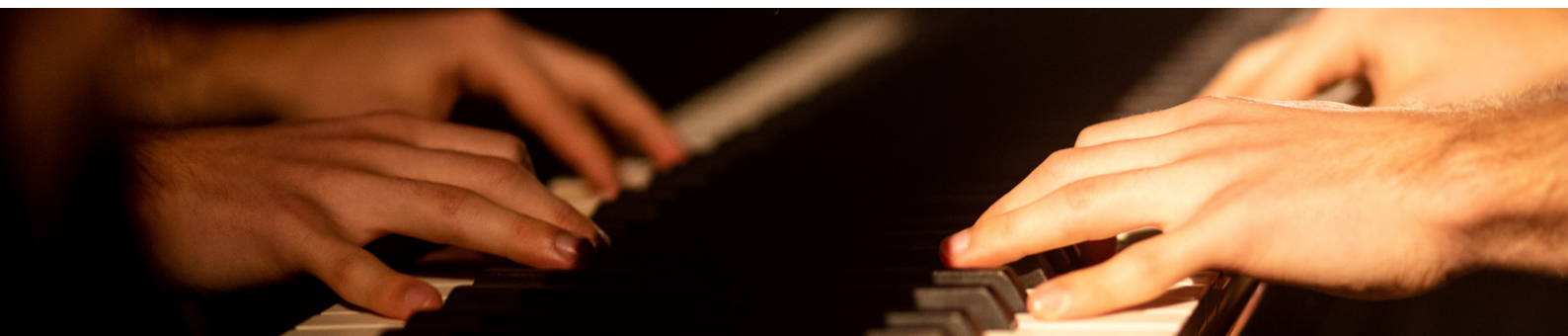
Grade 3

LYNCH / nDcvr Agnt

The coded title gives a good clue to the mysterious character of this piece and there is much scope for expressive, colourful playing. There is also the opportunity to use the pedal here, showing how it can be employed to enhance the atmosphere of the music, as well as assisting in *legato* playing. An appealing piece for younger students, who will enjoy using their imagination to bring the music fully to life.

Moderately sneaky ♩ = 120

© Copyright 2020 Trinity College London Press Ltd



TAN / The Night of the Sleepy Panda

This piece, by Edric Tan, was a winner in the Trinity Young Composers' Competition. Many younger students are intrigued by the black keys of the piano and the special, 'Eastern' sound created when playing only on the black notes. This expressive piece gives students a wonderful opportunity to really appreciate the distinct sounds created through use of the black keys and the pentatonic scale. The notes themselves are not that challenging, but pedal is employed throughout, providing an excellent opportunity to practise good *legato* pedal technique while also bringing greater atmosphere to the music. A very appealing piece for students of all ages.

Andante cantabile ♩ = 90

mp

Ped. \wedge *sim.*

© Copyright 2020 Trinity College London Press Ltd

DIABELLI / Rondino (duet)

This cheerful piece by Diabelli displays all the characteristics of late Classical-era music in miniature form and is a delightful opportunity for pupil and teacher to play together. Not only are duets great fun to play, they also provide important learning tools, for example time-keeping, co-ordination and balance between the parts. Contrasting articulation and dynamics, and a clear pulse are key to bringing this enjoyable piece to life. A great opportunity for students to practise very precise, crisp *staccato* and accents, which add to the music's drama and humour. This piece will appeal to students of all ages.

Allegro ♩ = 104

r.h. 8va throughout

p

© Copyright 2020 Trinity College London Press Ltd



Grade 4

LEMOINE / Étude No. 23

A sophisticated early Romantic piece which combines a variety of techniques with artistic expression. Here students can begin to make their own interpretative and artistic decisions as the music offers plenty of scope for characterful playing. This piece will suit a more ambitious student with confident knowledge of keyboard geography and good musical imagination.

Moderato ♩ = c.112

© Copyright 2020 Trinity College London Press Ltd

MIFSUD / Remembrance

Another Young Composers' Competition winner, this elegant piece will suit the more technically and artistically assured student and would certainly appeal to teenagers and adults. This piece will also suit a more ambitious student as it employs a number of techniques including lateral arm movement (for the left-hand broken chord figures) and voicing, to manage both a melody and accompaniment in the right hand. The nostalgic, rather poignant character of this music offers plenty of scope for expressive playing and more personal interpretative choices, for example, in the use of *rubato* to enhance the mood.

Con dolcezza ♩ = 96

© Copyright 2020 Trinity College London Press Ltd



TANEVA / Balloons in the Air

This lovely piece combines jazz-infused harmonies, pedal and expression to create music which is wonderfully atmospheric. It requires great accuracy in the placing of the hands and chords, and from a technical point of view is an excellent exercise in keyboard geography and managing leaps. It's surprisingly sophisticated, despite the seeming simplicity of the scoring, and will appeal to more artistically mature students and those with an interest in jazz.

Grade 5

ANON / Coranto

This vivacious dance is a wonderful opportunity to discover some English Renaissance music and to find out more about the kind of keyboard instruments that were played before the invention of the piano. This may also influence how the music is approached from a stylistic perspective. Technical challenges include *legato* chords, clear articulation and precise rhythmic control to highlight the dance character. While there are limited dynamics marked, this should not deter the student from employing more expressive elements in their playing.

Lively $\text{♩} = c.112$

The musical score for 'Coranto' by Anon. is presented in a two-staff format. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 3/2. The tempo is marked 'Lively' with a quarter note equal to approximately 112 beats per minute. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamics like 'f' (forte). The piece is characterized by its rhythmic complexity and the need for precise articulation and legato playing.

© Copyright 2020 Trinity College London Press Ltd



WEDGWOOD / Large Wave

Another sophisticated contemporary piano piece, this music is inspired by the Japanese artist Hokusai's 'Large Wave' and owes something to the music of Claude Debussy in its impressionistic character. As such, it will appeal to more ambitious students who are able to manage its technical and artistic challenges, and it presents the opportunity to demonstrate how fluid hand and arm gestures inform and enhance the sound in performance. It's definitely a piece that adult students or teenagers would enjoy playing. There is great scope for expression, and a degree of artistic freedom is invited from the start.

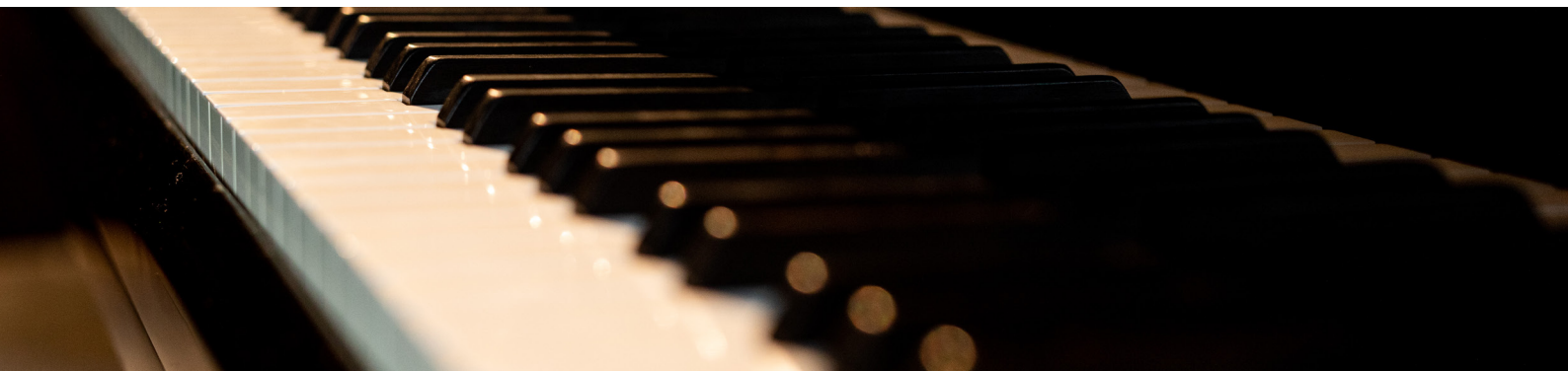
The musical score for 'Large Wave' is presented in three measures. The first measure is in 4/4 time, marked 'Dreamily, with freedom' and 'p'. It features a melodic line in the right hand with fingerings 1, 2, 1, b, 4, 5 and a bass line in the left hand with fingerings 4, 1, 2. The second measure is also in 4/4 time, marked 'p' and '8va', with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The third measure is in 3/4 time, marked 'Flowing' and 'mf' with a tempo marking of quarter note = 72. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Pedaling instructions (Ped.) are provided for both hands at the end of each measure.

Music by Pam Wedgwood © 2017 Faber Music Ltd, Reproduced by permission of the publisher, Taken from Pam Wedgwood's Piano Gallery; <https://www.fabermusic.com/shop/piano-gallery-p427910>, All Rights Reserved.

McCABE / Sports Car

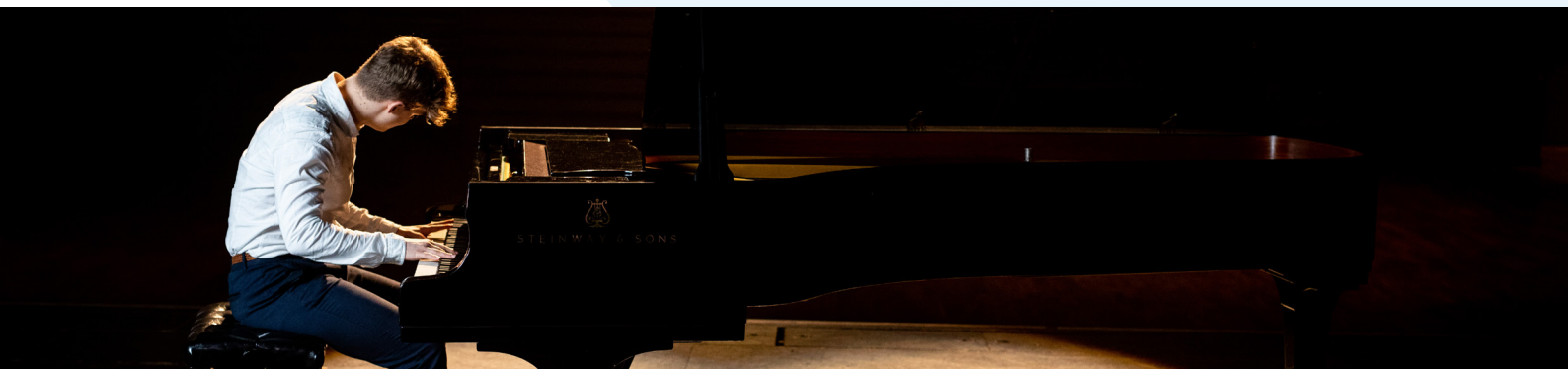
A lively, perpetual motion piece, this is an excellent example of characterful contemporary piano music and will appeal to players of all ages. It combines a number of technical demands – hand independence, *ostinato bass*, contrasting articulation – with a full range of expressive elements, and will suit a more confident student.

'I hope you and your students enjoy exploring the new Piano syllabus.'



Frances Wilson

Frances Wilson is a pianist and piano teacher, as well as a writer on classical music and piano playing as The Cross-Eyed Pianist. Frances returned to the piano seriously in her late 30s, after a 20-year absence, studying initially with Penelope Roskell (professor of piano and piano pedagogy at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance) and then with Graham Fitch. She has also participated in masterclasses and workshops with Murray McLachlan, Charlotte Tomlinson, Stephen Savage and Alan Fraser. Frances holds Associate and Licentiate Performance Diplomas, both with distinction, and for 12 years taught piano privately at her home in south-west London.



Your performance. Your choice.

trinitycollege.com/piano