



THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

(1900–present)

Composers

Béla Bartók (1881–1945)
Aaron Copland (1900–1991)
Alberto Ginastera (1915–1983)
Alexander Gretchaninoff (1864–1956)
Dmitri Kabalevsky (1904–1987)
Aram Khachaturian (1903–1978)
Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)
Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)
Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959)

Keyboard Instruments

Piano
Organ
Electronic Keyboard
Synthesizer
Digital Piano

Typical Forms and Compositional Techniques

12-Tone
Aleatoric
Free Form
Fantasy
Dance
Sonata
Character Piece

KEYS TO STYLISTIC MASTERY



Melody

Unpredictable or irregular phrase lengths.



Make note of the lengths of phrases to assist you in interpretation and memorization.

Shape is often jagged using very narrow or very wide intervals; often based on non-traditional scales.



Plan fingering carefully to play these less familiar patterns.

Based on *nationalistic* folk tunes.



Learn about the composer's heritage and the country's folk music.

Melodies can have big leaps making them awkward to sing; they are often not focused on moving toward a goal note.



Play the melody alone; listen and determine how to make it musical.



Rhythm

Greater use of irregular meters like $\frac{5}{4}$ or $\frac{7}{8}$.



Look for the rhythmic groupings that will assist you in hearing the meter easily. Count aloud as you play.

Often there are meter changes.



Circle all meter changes and write in the counting.

Jazz rhythms with characteristic *accents* and *syncopations*.



Write in the counting. Bring out weak beats that are emphasized.

Rhythm is used to evoke power and drama.



Notice where rhythm is used to create excitement, and be sure to maintain the intensity.

Harmony

Lack of a strong feeling of key center or *tonality*. Use of *bitonality* or *atonality*.

- 🔑 Look for any *tonal center* and write in the key names.

Chords made up of 4ths, 5ths or clusters of three or more adjacent notes to create a *dissonant* sound.

- 🔑 Identify intervals used in the chords.

Global influences lead to new scales and harmonies.

- 🔑 Learn about different harmonies used in the folk music of the country.

Tempo

Changes indicated by the composer.

- 🔑 Circle all tempo changes.

Texture

Very specific *articulation* and varied touches; sound may range from very muted to very percussive.

- 🔑 Listen for the desired quality of sound needed for the piece.

Technique

Hand shape must adjust to narrow or wide intervals and unusual chord shapes.

- 🔑 Notice the intervals used and expand or contract your hand to adjust.

Alternating hand patterns are used to create a percussive effect for rhythmic intensity.

- 🔑 Keep wrists loose and fingers firm for clarity and evenness.

Dynamics

The full range of the instrument is utilized, from *ppp* to *fff*—a wide dynamic spectrum.

- 🔑 Observe the composer's specific dynamics.

Expression

Titles tell a story; pieces express a wide range of emotions; sounds reflect the *character*.

- 🔑 Look at the title and determine the mood or moods in the score. If there is no descriptive title, listen to the sounds you are creating and decide what mood is conveyed.

Additional Considerations

Use of unconventional pianistic movements such as playing with the palm or forearm, or tapping the wood of the piano.

- 🔑 Listen to the interesting sounds created by these unusual ways of playing the piano.

Big physical gestures and motions needed to accommodate extreme registers of the piano.

- 🔑 Time your motions according to the tempo; sharp gestures for faster tempos, and graceful gestures for slower tempos.

There are frequent clef changes.

- 🔑 Circle all clef changes before learning the piece.

Unusual notation devices that can be interpreted in a variety of ways.

- 🔑 Learn about each composer's special devices. Have fun with the new sounds.