



JAZZ PIANO SCHOOL

Learning Freedom

Solo Piano System

By Brenden Lowe

Video 1 - LH Solo Piano Components

1. Solo Piano Series Part 1 – LH Role in Solo Piano

a. LH Components

The LH in solo piano plays roots and serves as a foundation for the RH. The LH is responsible for the bass notes, and the main harmonies within the written chords (usually the root, 3rd and 7th). We will add harmonies from the LH to the RH in future chapters, but for now the root, 3rd, and 7th, must be played somehow between both hands. At first the LH can be overwhelming, but once you understand its top function, it is simpler. A lot of the times, the tempo and register of a tune will dictate your best LH option. Here are some common LH approaches:

1. Only bass notes – When just playing bass notes, your RH needs to add 3 +7 under the melody if your LH is going to use this option. (figure 17.8)

Figure 17.8



2. Bass note then shells - This method is great for medium swing tunes. It allows you to cover the bass and harmonies at the same time. It is a little tricky at first but it'll come very easy with a little practice (see figure 17.8)

Figure 17.9



3. Bass note then full chord – Just as we jumped to our shells in the previous step, we can also jump to a full chord. This chord can be an inversion or rootless voicing.



4. Root and 7th – This is an easier way to add bass notes. I named a root in this example only because when we use the root and 7th, our LH will be just below the middle register. When we play one bass note, we will play this note in the low end of the piano. If we play the 1 +7 in that low end it will sound muddy. (*Note. RH has to include the 3rd underneath the melody when your LH is playing 1+7 to account for 1, 7, and 3). See Figure 17.10

Figure 17.10



5. Root and 3rd – Playing the root and third is a similar way to add in bass notes but again with this step we need to stay below the middle register for the two notes to blend. The lower we get, the worse this will sound. (*Note. The RH has to account for the 7th when your LH is using this option). See Figure 17.11

Figure 17.11



6. Root and 3rd, (a tenth apart) – This is a great way to voice the root and 3rd option, as a tenth. This gives a nice spread of the voices and will work great when we add the RH to this combination (see Figure 17.12)

Figure 17.12

The figure shows a single bass clef staff with four measures. Each measure contains two notes forming a tenth interval. Above each measure is a chord symbol and the notes are written below the staff lines.

| Chord | Notes (Tenth) |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| C-7 | C2, E3 |
| F7 | F2, A3 |
| B ^b MAJ7 | B ^b 2, D3 |
| E ^b MAJ7 | E ^b 2, G3 |

Video 2 - RH Harmonization w/ Shells

1. Solo Piano Series - Part 2 (RH Melody Harmonization with shells)

a. Adding Shells beneath the melody.

- i. The first step to arranging a selection for solo piano is to add shells below the melody. Thus far we've played solo piano by playing just the melody in our RH and harmonies or bass notes in the LH. When we move some of the chord tones to our RH, you will hear a significant change in the sound of your tune. We do this by adding the shells beneath the melody. While we learn this concept, our LH will only be used to play bass notes. Here's how to incorporate the LH concepts you learned in the last lesson with this RH shell strategy:

1. **Harmonize shell voicings below the melody with chords** – When the melody lines up with chords we will use these shells.

- a. **One Chord Change** - If there is one chord change for that measure, and the melody starts on beat 1, you will harmonize that melody note with the shells of that chord change. (see figure 18.8)

Figure 18.8



- b. **Two Chord Changes** – If there are two chords for the measure, you will harmonize the melody note beneath the first chord change, and harmonize the other melody note beneath the second chord change. (see figure 18.9)

Figure 18.9



2. **Shells without melody** – Sometimes you will see chords on beats that do not have any melody notes, so what do we do here? We will just play the shells alone in our RH without the melody. For example, if the melody note stays the same but the harmonies change, you'll voice-lead your shells to the next chord. (see figure 18.10)

Figure 18.10



3. **Melody note that is a shell note** – Sometimes the melody will be the 3rd or 7th of the chord. When this happens we have two options. (see figure 18.11)

Figure 18.11

- a. **Add the second shell below the melody**



Figure 18.12

- b. **Add both shells and double the melody note.**



On the first beat of this example, doubling works great. On the 3rd beat though, the melody is too low to double so you'll play the other shell below the melody.

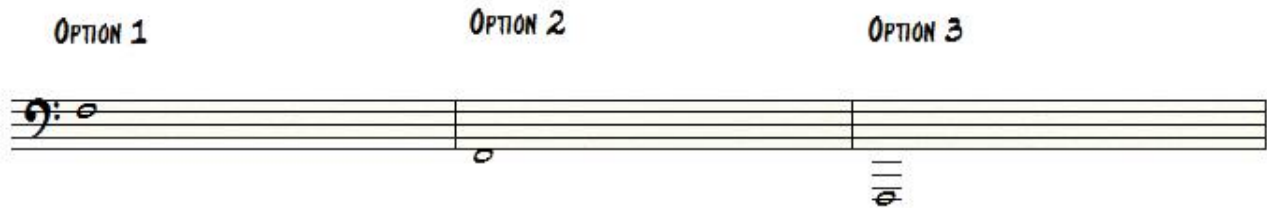
Video 3 - Combining LH + RH Components

1. Solo Piano Series- Part 3(Combining RH and LH components)

a. Spacing between the melody and bass notes. Filling the gaps with 1+7 and 1+3 (importance of register) -

i. The spacing between the melody and bass notes is an extremely important concept. Where the melody is on the piano, in relation to the register you choose to place the root will dictate the options your LH has. To review, your LH has the following options to choose from:

1. Just bass note (see figure 19.10)



2. Bass note, then jump to shells (see figure 19.11)

Figure 19.11



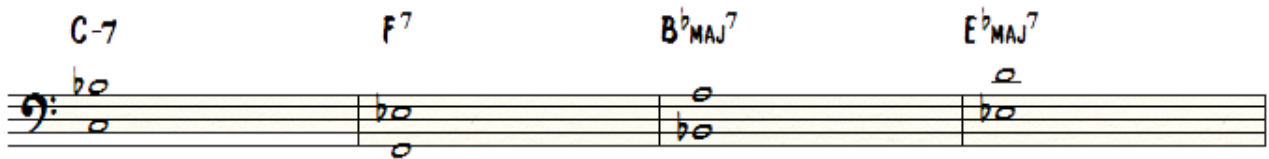
3. Bass note, then jump to full chord (see figure 19.12)

Figure 19.12



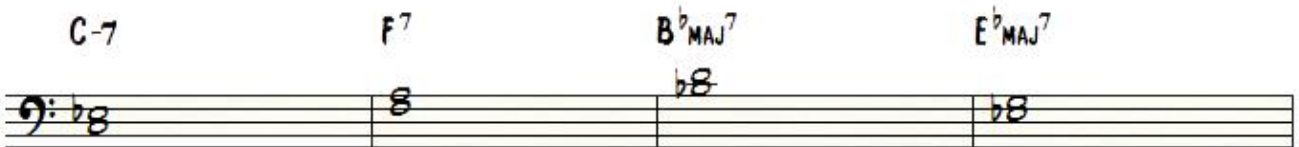
4. Root and 7th (see figure 19.13)

Figure 19.13



5. Root and 3rd, (third apart) (see figure 19.14)

Figure 19.14



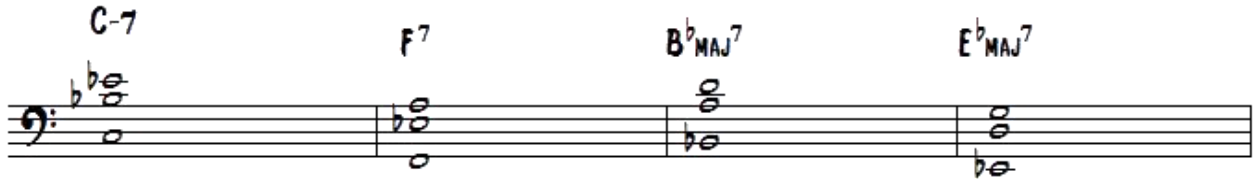
6. Root and 3rd, (tenth apart) (see figure 19.15)

Figure 19.15



7. Root, 7, 3rd(see figure 19.16)

Figure 19.16



ii. Step 1 – Start with the melody

1. The melody we will be using to practice spacing between bass notes and melody notes is “All The Things You Are”.(see figure 19.17)

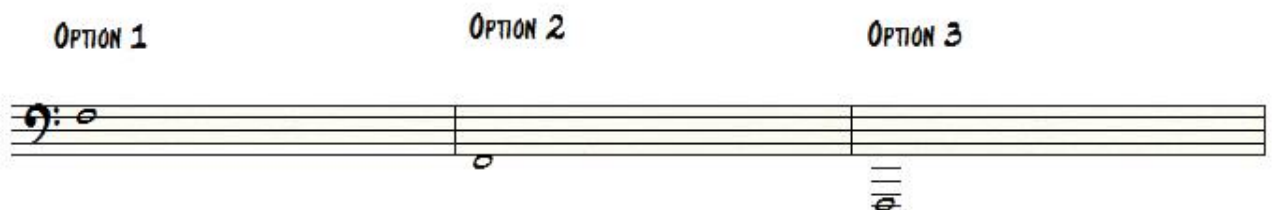
Figure 19.17



iii. Step 2 – Choose which octave to place the root

1. The great thing about jazz is that it gives us lots of freedom! We can choose which octave we want to place the root in. For the first chord of “All the things you are” (F-7) we can place the root in any of the following three places (see figure 19.18):
 - a. Option 1 – The F a tenth down from the melody note (the third F up on the piano)
 - b. Option 2 – The second F from the bottom of the piano.
 - c. Option 3 – The first F on the piano.

Figure 19.18



iv. *Play root and 3rd or root and 7th*- With this option we are limited with the amount of space between the root and the melody.

1. Bass Note Option 1 (The F a tenth down from the melody note - the third F up on the piano)
 - a. Root and third- When your LH plays the root and third, your RH needs to add the 7th in below the melody note. (see figure 19.19)

Figure 19.19



- b. Root and 7th - If your LH plays 1+7, your RH doesn't need to add any more notes because the melody note is the 3rd. This gives us the root, 3rd and 7th. (see figure 19.20)

Figure 19.20



2. Bass Note Option 2 (the second F from the bottom of the piano)
 - a. Root and 7th - Your LH can play the root and 7th starting on the second F from the bottom of the piano, but due to the register this can sound muddy. Your RH has some room to add the shells below the melody. (see figure 19.21)

Figure 19.21

MELODY W/ SHELLS

The figure shows two staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It contains a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, Bb4, and C5. Below the melody are two chords: a triad (G, Bb, D) and a dyad (Bb, D). The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a single note, F3, which is the root of the chord. Below the staff is the label "ROOT + 7TH".

ROOT + 7TH

- b. Just the bass note – The root is low enough so we can play the bass note while our RH adds the shells below the melody. (see figure 19.22)

Figure 19.22

MELODY + SHELLS
F-7

The figure shows two staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It contains a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, Bb4, and C5. Below the melody are two chords: a triad (G, Bb, D) and a dyad (Bb, D). The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a single note, F3, which is the root of the chord. Below the staff is the label "ROOT".

ROOT

- c. Bass note to shells – Your left hand can also play the bass note, and then play shells while the RH plays the melody. (see figure 19.23)

Figure 19.2:

MELODY
F-7

ROOT TO SHELLS

- d. Bass note to rootless voicing or inversion- The bass note can jump to a rootless voicing or inversion. (see figure 19.24)

Figure 1

MELODY
F-7

ROOT TO ROOTLESS VOICING

3. Bass Note Option 3 (the first F on the piano) – This bass note is so low that we can't play 1 +7 or 1+3 (tenth apart) because it would sound so muddy.
 - a. Bass Note alone – LH plays the bass note alone, RH voices the shells underneath the melody. (see figure 19.25)

Figure 19.25

MELODY + SHELLS
F-7

BASS NOTE

Detailed description: The figure shows two staves. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains a melody consisting of two notes: B-flat (middle line) and A-flat (space below the middle line). Below the treble staff are two bass clef staves. The first bass staff contains a single bass note, F (two lines below the staff). The second bass staff contains two notes: B-flat (middle line) and A-flat (space below the middle line), which are the 'shells' mentioned in the text.

- b. Bass alone then jumps to shells. (see figure 19.26)

Figure 19.26

MELODY
F-7

BASS NOTE TO SHELLS

Detailed description: The figure shows two staves. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains a melody consisting of two notes: B-flat (middle line) and A-flat (space below the middle line). The bottom staff is a bass clef staff. It contains a single bass note, F (two lines below the staff), followed by two notes: B-flat (middle line) and A-flat (space below the middle line), which are the 'shells' mentioned in the text.

- c. Bass note alone, then chord. (see figure 19.27)

Figure 19.27



v. *Choose your RH harmonization*

1. When choosing a RH harmonization remember that the space your RH has will be determined by the option your LH chooses. If you play a low bass note, your RH will have lots of room to fill below the melody with the shells.

vi. *Conclusion*

1. Placing your melody then choosing your bass note will help you arrange your hands during your solo piano piece. Continue to follow these steps and you'll create beautiful sounding solo arrangements!

Video 4 - Filling In RH Harmonization

1. Solo Piano Series- Part 4 Adding the Root and 5th below the melody

- a. *Using Chord Tones To Fill* – Using chord tones to fill beneath the melody creates rich sounding voicings. We’ve already learned how to harmonize a melody with the shells (3rd and 7th) of the chords. Now all we are going to do is double the root in our LH, or add the 5th. To explain how to do this, we’ll use the first chord (F-) and melody note (Ab) from “All The Things You Are”.

- i. *Step 1 – Add your shells below the melody*

1. Apply shell voicings below the melody when the harmonies are changing. Change the shells if the melody stays on the same note and the harmonies move. (see figure 20.3)

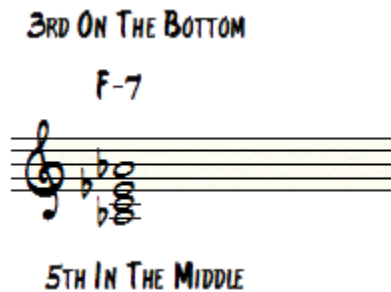
Figure 20.3



ii. Step 2 – Add the 5th between the shells

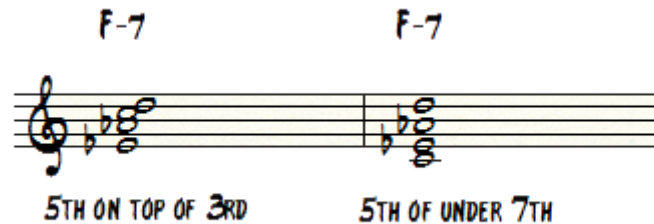
1. Adding the 5th between the shells will give your voicings a fuller sound. If the 3rd is at the bottom of your shell, then the 5th will sit in between the 3rd and 7th. (see figure 20.4)

Figure 20.4



If the 7th is at the bottom of your shell, then the 5th has two options for placement depending on the register of the melody: on top of the 3rd or below the 7th. (see figure 20.5)

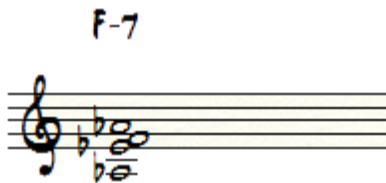
Figure 20.5



iii. *Step 3 – Add the root between the shells*

1. Adding the root between shells can create a thick texture. In this option, the root will always be placed directly under the melody note. (see figure 20.26)

Figure 20.26



iv. *Step 4 – Playing 1,3,5,7 below the melody*

1. This step is tricky because we have lots of notes and only 5 fingers. This method is primarily used on ballads because you have more time to readjust your hand because of the slow tempo. If the melody is a chord tone, and you play the other 3 chord tones below it, you will be playing the chord in inversion. In “All The Things You Are”, the melody note is the b3. If we play the root, 7th, and 5th below it, a 2nd chord inversion is created. (see figure 20.27)

Figure 20.27



While your RH is playing these new voicings, your LH will follow the same process we have discussed in previous lessons.

Video 5 – RH & LH Foundation

- a. Solo piano contains A LOT of different elements that come together to form a complete solo sound. Some of these elements include the voicings you use, how you combine the melody with your LH, various rhythmic ideas, hand independence and various other elements. In this first part of the advanced solo piano series I'm going to combine all the previous steps from the Intermediate series but take it one step further and explain exactly how we begin to progress our solo piano so we sound like true professionals. Let's review the steps in the Intermediate series.

The first thing we covered was Left Hand solo piano components.

1. Just bass notes
2. Bass note then shells -
3. Bass note then full chord
4. Root and 7th-
5. Root and 3rd
6. Root and 3rd (tenth)
7. Root + 7th to Root + 3rd Combination
8. Root + 7th to Root + 3rd (tenth) Combination

The second step we covered was our RH harmonizing below the melody with shells in various ways.

- a. **One Chord Change** - For example if there is one chord change for that measure, and the melody starts on beat 1, you will harmonize that melody note with the shells to that note chord change.



- b. **Two Chord Changes** – Now if there are two chords for the measure, you will harmonize the melody note beneath the first chord change and harmonize the other melody note beneath the second chord change. (see example)



The third step was combining both hands together. This was an extremely important step as it begins to actually sound like the solo piano style. (See Lesson 19 for review)

The fourth step was adding in root and 5th as fillers in the RH beneath the melody. (See Lesson 20 for review)

So we've built a nice foundation from which to improve upon. A lot of the advancement from here on has to do with how to establish and maintain a tempo, adding extensions and colors below the melody, comping for yourself during the melody, and supporting yourself during your solo and filling in the space during the melody. We need to start paying attention to some very specific details that have a huge impact on whether or not your solo performance actually sounds good.

You want to make sure you've gotten very comfortable with this overview and can do exactly what I've done in this video. Meaning go through real book tunes and play them through at a comfortable tempo while arranging them on the spot with the previous steps we've talked about from the Intermediate course.

Video 6 – Establishing Time With Tempos & Styles

Once you get comfortable with voicings and how to arrange your hands, the majority of playing solo piano is about creating a solid time while you play. Without the feeling of a consistent tempo, a fairly easy tune can begin to fall apart.

There a number of different methods we can use to set up the time of a tune depending upon the feel of the tune. Take a look at these different textures we can use when establishing a tempo

1. Left Hand Bass Notes and Chords- Broken Stride
2. Full Stride
3. Walking Bass Lines
4. RH Improv
5. RH Chords Comping with LH Bass
6. RH + LH Two Handed Comping Chords

When to establish the tempo may be another question you've asked. When playing solo piano it's entirely up to you to decide this. I've heard Bill Evans solo piano in which he practically never establishes a tempo. You could also start tune and go right into the tempo from the beginning. This factor is pretty much up to you.

Video 7 – Analyzing and Filling Space

When playing solo piano we must always remember that we are the entire band. We must play the melody, harmonies, bass, and support ourselves through rhythmic and harmonic comping. A lot of times I'll hear someone play a melody with chords and bass but leave out the conversation piece that must happen in the space. This conversation is happening between the melody and small bits of space that you have to respond. Not all the time must you fill the space depending upon the tune, but most of the time it will be necessary.

There are many types of textures and methods I use to fill space in melodies. Let's look at the list below.

a. RH leaves melody and comps below - This is a very easy and effective way to comp for yourself. Don't forget you can leave the melody after playing it to move your RH down to comp with your LH.

b. LH Bass Fills with line of a couple stabs - Gerald Clayton turned me on to this texture and I absolutely love it. You are essentially creating more movement or a full counter line in the space with your LH. It is very technically hard but you can create simple lines that still sound good.

c. Passing chords - This was a full series in the Intermediate portion of JPS. You can use any of the various passing chord movements and harmonies

we've talked about to fill up the space in tunes. Just to jog your memory, some of these might include diatonic movements, passing diminished chords, double handed lines, inversions and now we can add drop 2 inversions or any various comping using drop 2's.

d. Resolutions in both hands to third - This is more of a fun little inner voice movement that I like to use to emphasize the resolution from the 2 minor chord to the V7.

e. Quick reharmon movements - All of these movements were described in the Intermediate portion of JPS but it's not until you can utilize them in a fairly quick manner that they will begin to make an extreme change in your solo piano and comping!

f. Quick run - Oscar Peterson and Art Tatum were kings of the run. Tatum would even get double handed runs going in opposite directions for breaks in the melody! Try that only if you dare. Now obviously you do not have to go to that extreme, but you can use these little spaces to add nice little runs in that give your solo piano playing some flare.

Video 8 – Advanced Textures For Melody & Improv

a. Original RH Melody LH Components - The majority of the time I will start off with this texture. I would consider this your go to and one you will hear most often on albums. The mistake I see most beginners make is they only play the melody in the RH while the LH plays its own components. There is nothing wrong with this approach but it is very simple. Remember, you have a lot of fingers left on your right hand after playing the single melody line. These fingers should be utilized underneath the melody to create a full and interactive sound that integrates with the LH components.

b. Just LH Bass RH Melody or Improv - This is a simple yet effective texture to really spread out your texture on the piano. When your LH is making use of the lowest end on the piano while your RH is improvising or playing the melody in the high end, it makes for a great combination of sound.

c. Sustained Chords, Pedal No Time - This is a trickier texture to use because it deals with how you feel the time. Most of the time at a tempo of 120 bpm you will be feeling each and every quarter note within yourself or your playing. You could also conceptualize this tempo in half though by feeling the half notes at 60 bpm. So you no longer feel 4 beats, you only feel 2. This slight change in how the tempo is felt will drastically change how you phrase the comping you play for the melody and your solo. When you

feel a time in half or even quartered, meaning you only feel one beat per measure you create the illusion that time has slowed down even though it hasn't. This is the perfect spot to sustain your chords out or use the pedal. This will create more of an airy atmosphere to the tune before you start to swing. Once you have worked on this texture a little you can begin to go in and out of the airy open atmosphere with the hard quarter note swing feeling.

d. More Space With Stabs RH Swinging - This is a great texture for when things start to heat up. In this variation your RH is mainly controlling the tempo through the melody or improv while the LH provides just enough bass and chordal support through stabs. You don't want your LH to be overbearing but think of it as more of a builder that can help your RH stand out.

e. The Slow Stride Swing with Space - I absolutely love this texture for the amount of space that is left in the stride. Normally when you think about stride you think of a consistent medium to fast swing pace. This texture is more for the slow, bluesy or ballad type of style. It can really be used with any slow tune you want though. The hardest part about this texture is you have to be comfortable with the amount of space you are leaving. If you're doing it right it'll feel like there are large gaps that should be filled but do NOT fill these gaps. These gaps are the magic that bring out this texture. Because of the slow tempos this is used in you can get very creative with the combination of your LH and RH during the melody and while you are improvising.

LESSON 37

STEP 12 - JUST FRIENDS

♩=120

PIANO

The first system of music is for the piano. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 120. The music consists of two staves. The right hand starts with a whole note chord (F#, C, G, D) and then plays a triplet of eighth notes (A, B, C) in the third measure. The left hand plays a whole note chord (F#, C, G, D) in the first measure and then rests in the second and third measures.

5

PNO.

The second system of music is for the piano. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The music consists of two staves. The right hand plays a triplet of eighth notes (A, B, C) in the third measure. The left hand plays a whole note chord (F#, C, G, D) in the first measure and then rests in the second and third measures.

9

PNO.

The third system of music is for the piano. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The music consists of two staves. The right hand plays a series of eighth notes (A, B, C, D, E, F#, G, A) in the first measure. The left hand plays a series of eighth notes (F#, G, A, B, C, D, E, F#) in the first measure.

13

PNO.

The fourth system of music is for the piano. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The music consists of two staves. The right hand plays a triplet of eighth notes (A, B, C) in the third measure. The left hand plays a whole note chord (F#, C, G, D) in the first measure and then rests in the second and third measures.

17

PNO.

The fifth system of music is for the piano. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The music consists of two staves. The right hand plays a triplet of eighth notes (A, B, C) in the third measure. The left hand plays a whole note chord (F#, C, G, D) in the first measure and then rests in the second and third measures.

21

PNO.

25

PNO.

29

PNO.

21

Pno.

Musical notation for measures 21-24. The system consists of two staves, Treble and Bass clef. Measure 21: Treble has a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Measure 22: Treble has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Measure 23: Treble has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Measure 24: Treble has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2.

25

Pno.

Musical notation for measures 25-28. The system consists of two staves, Treble and Bass clef. Measure 25: Treble has a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Measure 26: Treble has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Measure 27: Treble has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Measure 28: Treble has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2.

29

Pno.

Musical notation for measures 29-31. The system consists of two staves, Treble and Bass clef. Measure 29: Treble has a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Measure 30: Treble has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Measure 31: Treble has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2.

32

Pno.

Musical notation for measures 32-34. The system consists of two staves, Treble and Bass clef. Measure 32: Treble has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Measure 33: Treble has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Measure 34: Treble has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass has a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2.

Stella By Starlight Transcription

As Played By Brenden Lowe From Jazz Piano School

Rubato

♩ = 120

Piano

Measures 1-6

Pno.

Measures 7-10

Pno.

Measures 11-14

Pno.

Measures 15-18

Pno.

Measures 19-22

Pno.

23

Pno.

27

Pno.

31

Pno.

35

All Of Me

♩ = 180

Piano

The first system of music is in 4/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) begins with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and B4, and a quarter rest. The left hand (bass clef) starts with a quarter note G2, followed by quarter notes A2 and B2, and a quarter rest. The system continues with various chords and melodic fragments in both hands.

6

Pno.

The second system starts at measure 6. The right hand features a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) followed by a dotted quarter note G4. The left hand has a triplet of eighth notes (G2, A2, B2) and a dotted quarter note G2. The system concludes with a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) in the right hand.

11

Pno.

The third system begins at measure 11. The right hand has a dotted half note G4. The left hand plays a series of chords: G2-A2-B2, G2-A2-B2, and G2-A2-B2. The system ends with a quarter note G4 in the right hand.

15

Pno.

The fourth system starts at measure 15. The right hand has a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and B4, and a quarter rest. The left hand has a quarter note G2, followed by quarter notes A2 and B2, and a quarter rest. The system continues with various chords and melodic fragments.

19

Pno.

The fifth system begins at measure 19. The right hand has a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and B4, and a quarter rest. The left hand has a quarter note G2, followed by quarter notes A2 and B2, and a quarter rest. The system concludes with a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes (G2, A2, B2) in the left hand.

24

Pno.

28

Pno.

31

Pno.