

## Teaching 20<sup>th</sup> Century Intermediate Repertoire in Irregular Meter and Other Technical Challenges

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Hello everyone, my name is Jinkyung Kim from South Korea, studying DMA in Piano Pedagogy at the University of South Carolina. Today, I would like to talk about Teaching 20<sup>th</sup> Century Intermediate Repertoire in Irregular Meter and approaches to its technical challenges.

Squared time signature usually gives listeners a sense of stability. Also, the rhythm is easily divided into two that helps young learners understand subdivided notes. However, as the level increases, intermediate students often neglect the duple or triple pulsation since they are so used to those time signatures. How can teachers refresh students' mannerism towards rhythm and meter?

In this Talk, I would like to share a piece called "Counting" from *Modern Miniatures* composed by Goolkasian Rahbee that features irregular meter and new metric challenges, which may provide some solutions with other pedagogical benefits.

*Modern Miniatures* is similar to character-piece collections by Gurlitt or Burgmüller because each piece, or movement has only one primary objective.<sup>1</sup> The "Counting" introduces changing meter to late elementary to early intermediate students in a highly organized, approachable fashion. The subtitle of this work, "1-12-123-1234-12345" provides students a group of counting that changes each measure. As you see in the excerpt, after 1/4, 2/4, and 3/4 time signatures repeat twice, 1/4, 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 5/4 meters follow next. These patterned changes of meter simplify the structure of the piece and fascinate intermediate learners. Also, the

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<sup>1</sup> Rahbee, Goolkasian. *Modern Miniatures* (Fort Lauderdale: The F. J. H. Music Company, 2004), 2.

juxtaposition of the meter and the rhythm guide students to catch the metric variations. For instance, in the RH, the composer uses a cluster of two-quarter notes for 2/4 meter, a cluster of three-quarter notes for 3/4 meter, and so on so forth. This aspect can be used as a tool for students to remember the metric changes. At the same time, dynamics are growing along with the thickening texture, creating a satisfying large volume. The left-hand part is rather simple, which enables students to focus on the more complex part of the right-hand patterns.

Additional challenges may occur when students play the clusters of the notes. For students who have thin or long fingers, it would be hard to press three to five keys simultaneously and repeat them, because the fingers are likely to be banded out. To solve this challenge, relaxing wrists would be helpful because it can ease the tension in their hands, which also allows them to keep a steady beat without slowing down.

On top of that, the simple left-hand pattern may lead students to rush with excitement, while the repeated notes with finger-changes may cause stops in playing. In this matter, highlighting the skipping-down motions and setting fixed fingerings for the left-hand shifts would be helpful.

While I research this topic, I found many teachers are likely to avoid assigning this kind of works to early-level students because of the challenges of irregular meters and their asymmetric rhythms. However, many pedagogical works like the “Counting” are actually approachable and effective to develop rhythmic and metric novelty. As the Rahbee’s “Counting” suggests, learning non-traditional time signatures is not solely for advanced pianists. Instead, this 20<sup>th</sup> Century music may attract students and broaden their repertoire. For the further research, in the handout, I included a list of other pieces with a variety of levels and composers with a short description. Hope you find some worthy to explore them. Thank you.