

VIOLIN PLAYING

by

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Notes for Grade Exam
compositions written by
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CIRCUS MARCH

Circus March should be played at a brisk tempo to capture the excitement of the circus. It is a simple tune with a very energetic accompaniment.

Circus March has an 'Introduction - A - B - A - Coda' shape or pattern (*form or structure*). This is very common.

The 'Introduction', 'A' and 'Coda' sections are in the bright key of D major with two sharps in the key signature. The middle B section changes key (*modulates*) to the key of G major, which only has one sharp in the key signature. This has the effect of making the middle section quieter and calmer before the return to the opening (*da capo*) in the rousing key of D major. (G is the *subdominant* of D).

GYPSY DANCE

Gypsy Dance is a simple 'folk' type tune with some challenging 20th century harmonies in the piano part. The whole is reminiscent of some of Bela Bartok's working of Rumanian and Hungarian Folk Songs & Dances.

(Bela Bartok was a Hungarian composer who lived from 1881 to 1945. Like many other composers of this period he became deeply interested in collecting folk songs and dance music before modern life took over and they were lost. Another such composer was Ralph Vaughan-Williams who collected English folk songs and used them in his compositions.)

SAILING

Brought up by the sea, the composer Robert Trory enjoyed many happy days sailing a small boat off the Sussex coast.

The sea has many moods but the feeling in the piece is of a relatively calm day's sailing - easy and peaceful. The motion of the quavers in the piano part represents gentle waves. The music starts quietly, gets a little louder and then fades away at the end creating a picture of a few people watching from the beach, dozing in the sun, while the boat floats effortlessly past.

MORNING SONG

This song must be played with joy in the heart. It is one of those mornings when one feels good to be alive.

The song has an 'A - B - A' shape (structure or form) which is the classic 'aria form'. The 'A' sections are just a bright joyous tune. The middle 'B' section is more energetic, perhaps representing taking in big gulps of fresh air as the bedroom window is flung open or diving into a cold shower on a warm summers morning.

The tune stays on the top two strings of the violin and the piano part doesn't offer any contrast to the main theme but simply joins in the spirit of the piece.

COUNTRY WALK

This is a very simple three-note tune with a repetitive rhythmic pattern, '*short - short - long / short - short - long / short - short - short - short - short - short - long*'. This gives a pattern of '*one bar / one bar / two bars*' phrasing. The piano accompaniment is suggestive of a carefree walk in the country on a nice pleasant summer day. This is achieved by having short (*staccato*) notes in the left hand and smooth (*legato*) phrases in the right hand.

Unusually, this tune does not have a 'middle' section and expresses only one feeling or emotion.

ICE SKATING WALTZ

The violin tune represents an accomplished skater going smoothly round the rink with no slips or bumps. Towards the end the violin tune changes to two note slurs from the three note slurs earlier. This is to suggest that the skater puts in a few clever turns steps before coming easily to a safe stop.

Meanwhile the piano part is slipping all over the place with lots of scales that go in semi-tones (*chromatics*) and many slurs of an uneven number on notes (*irregular phrases*). The two ice dancers don't finish together as the piano goes on wobbling after the violin has come to rest.

A waltz is always written in a 'three beat' (*triplet*) time. Some waltzes are fast and some slow.

V I O L I N P L A Y I N G

S E R I E S C O N T E N T S

Book One - introduces Finger Pattern No 1, including all four fingers, elementary one-octave major scales & arpeggios with rhythmic variations, detached bowing, slurring and crossing strings. There are many original violin duets throughout. Some of these are published separately with piano accompaniments by Sally Mays.

(This book covers the requirements for the Preparatory or Initial Grade Exam*.)

Book Two - introduces Finger Patterns No 2, No 3 & No 4, together with portato bowing, linked dotted bowing, extended scales, chromatics, minor scales, scales in broken thirds, elementary finger exercises, double stops and the general development of sound bowing. There are many original violin duets throughout. Some are published separately with piano accompaniments by Sally Mays.

(This book covers the requirements for Grade One and Two*.)

Book Three - introduces third position and second position, further development of scales & arpeggios and chromatics, together with martelato bowing and re-taking the bow.

(This book covers the requirements for Grades Three & Four*.)

Book Four - introduces fourth, fifth and sixth positions, the development of bowing techniques, including string crossing, staccato, spiccato and the use of the fingers on the bow, together with further chromatics, left hand stretches and general facility.

(This book covers the requirements for Grades Five, Six and much of Grade Seven*.)

Book Five - is a selection of essential studies that introduces playing in higher positions, tone production, more advanced string crossing, ricochet bowing, up bow staccato, and develops general facility.

(This book completes the requirements for Grades Seven and covers the requirements for Grade Eight*. It then leads on to the further study of the standard works of Kreutzer, Rode, Dont, Gavines and Alard amongst others, and to the contemporary work of Simon Fischer.)

** The Grade exams referred to are the practical examinations conducted in the UK, and in many other parts of the world, by the examining bodies of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and the joint Trinity College and Guildhall School of Music known as Trinity Guildhall.*

Cover illustration 'The South Bank Fiddler' and other drawings © John Barber 2006

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Biographical Notes for Sally Mays

Sally Mays is a pianist of international repute. She performs regularly in many parts of the world, returning to her native Australia annually to broadcast and premiere new works. She is the editor of '*Australian Piano Music*', a seven-volume project of contemporary piano music, published by Currency press. She also performs with *Sounds Positive*, a contemporary music ensemble.

Sally Mays is an examiner for the ABRSM and has extensive experience of working with young people, both teaching and performing. Her collaboration with Robert Trory has produced a range of accompaniments that introduces the young violinist to many different genres and sounds.