



10

**GRADED PIANO PIECES
BY MALTESE COMPOSERS**

This publication introduces the contemporary style of Maltese composers to piano students from Grade 1 to Grade 6. **10 Graded Piano Pieces by Maltese Composers** is available as a free digital download and the album with the corresponding tracks is available on Spotify and all other major music streaming platforms.



This project is organised by the **Malta Association for Contemporary Music (MACM)** - committed to establish new heights in its goal to promote the performance and understanding of contemporary music in Malta.



This project is supported by Arts Council Malta



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CONTEMPORARY **MUSIC**

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Alexander Vella Gregory

Taħnina

Taħnina (2021) is the Maltese word for 'lullaby' but also means 'fondling' or 'stroking'. The music uses an ostinato bass with slowly shifting rhythmic patterns, giving a sense of constant if somewhat irregular cradling. A mournful melody is heard above the bass. The melody is repeated three times, each time in a different key. The piece focuses on simple rhythmic shifts and long legato phrases, two very important musical elements for the young pianist to master.

Tahnina

Alexander Vella Gregory
b. 1984

Andante tranquillo ♩ = 60

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Andante tranquillo' with a quarter note equal to 60 beats per minute. The dynamics are marked 'p cantabile'. The music features a series of chords and melodic lines with fingerings indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 5. A 'Ped.' (pedal) marking is present in the bass staff. A 'simile' marking with a flower-like symbol is also present.

The second system of the musical score continues from the first system. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The time signature is 3/4. The music features a series of chords and melodic lines with fingerings indicated by numbers 3, 5, and 3. The dynamics are marked 'p cantabile'.

The third system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'rit. al fine'. The dynamics are marked 'pp'. The music features a series of chords and melodic lines with fingerings indicated by numbers 5 and 3. A '8va' (octave) marking is present in the upper staff. The system ends with a double bar line.

Reuben Pace

Sunset

This piece is inspired by the spectacular sunset over Dingli Cliffs, one of the composer's favourite spots for country walks. This piece belongs to a collection of pieces for children composed by Pace in 2006. *Sunset* consists of a slowly descending musical motif which pauses on a chord. The motif is repeated with slight variations, always ending on a different chord to represent the different hues of a sunset.

Sunset

Reuben Pace
b. 1974

Lento

legato e leggero

Musical notation for measures 1-3. The piece is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats. Measure 1 starts with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The right hand plays a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, while the left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving bass lines.

Musical notation for measures 4-6. Measure 4 begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The right hand continues the melodic development with some rests, and the left hand features sustained chords and moving bass lines. Measure 6 ends with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic.

Musical notation for measures 7-10. Measure 7 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand has a more active melodic line with eighth notes, and the left hand continues with harmonic accompaniment. Measure 10 concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

Musical notation for measures 11-14. Measure 11 is marked *calando* (diminuendo). The right hand has a long, sweeping melodic line. Measure 12 starts with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand continues the melodic line, and the left hand features sustained chords. Measure 14 ends with a *morendo* (ritardando) instruction.

Paul Portelli

Knock Knock ...

This short piano composition is intended to portray the jovial mood associated with the verses sung during the Maltese traditional children's game *Bum Bum il-Bieb*. The theme is present throughout, and the composer employs a variety of techniques to modify the original motif and portray it in a more contemporary idiom. The piece begins with a rhythmic introduction before moving on to the main theme. It is then coloured bitonally and developed through rhythmic syncopation leading to an accented dissonant chord. This leads back to the tune, this time in a more playful style, with the left hand playing an ostinato from the introduction. Finally, another motif from the tune appears in a *fortissimo* unison ending on a G Major 7th chord.

Exercise

Giocososo (circa ♩=108)

The musical score is written for piano in 4/4 time, marked 'Giocososo (circa ♩=108)'. It consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes fingering numbers 2, 3, 1, 5, 1, 2, 3. The second system includes dynamics *mf* and *f*, and fingering numbers 3, 2, 3, 3, 2, 3. The piece concludes with a final *f* dynamic marking.

Knock Knock ...

Paul Portelli
b. 1973

Giocoso (circa ♩=108)

Musical notation for measures 1-3. The piece is in 4/4 time. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The right hand plays chords and eighth notes, while the left hand plays a simple bass line.

Musical notation for measures 4-7. The piece continues with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth notes, and the left hand provides harmonic support with chords and eighth notes.

Musical notation for measures 8-11. The piece continues with a forte (*f*) dynamic in the right hand and a piano (*p*) dynamic in the left hand. The right hand has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, while the left hand plays chords.

Musical notation for measures 12-16. The piece continues with a forte (*f*) dynamic in the right hand and a piano (*p*) dynamic in the left hand. The right hand has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, while the left hand plays chords.

Musical notation for measures 17-20. The piece continues with a forte (*f*) dynamic in the right hand and a piano (*p*) dynamic in the left hand. The right hand has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, while the left hand plays chords.

Musical notation for measures 21-24. The piece concludes with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The tempo is marked *Meno mosso*. The right hand has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, while the left hand plays chords.

André Paul Huber

The Dwarf and the Giant

This piece is inspired by a melodic dialogue taking place between the two characters. The high-pitched melody of the jolly dwarf and the grumpy giant in the bass. The stark contrast between the two characters is highlighted by the resulting dissonance between the two themes as well as the different registers on the keyboard. As the 'dialogue' proceeds, both themes shift closer to one another till they are sounding merely one octave apart where they end up reaching an agreement and settling their differences.

The Dwarf and the Giant

André Paul Huber
b. 1989

Happy Dance ♩ = 80

mf *p* *f* *mf* *f* *ff*

Steven Joseph Psaila

Silhouette

Silhouette is a short piano composition written with the intent to provide the listener with a simple and pleasant theme contrasted by an obscured background that is brought out by the use of the pedal and dissonance in the left hand. As it unwinds, the listener will identify the magical but also mystical illusion brought out by a silhouette. In fact this piano composition was inspired by the haunting imagery of the outer shapes of a chain of mountains seen from afar.

Exercise

♩ = 52-60

5 2 3 1 3 2 3 4 1 3

p *p* *mf* *f*

Ped.

4 *rall.* 3 1

5 1 3 2 1

Silhouette

Steven Joseph Psaila
b. 1989

$\text{♩} = 52-60$

5 2 3 1 2 3 1 5

p *mp* *p* *mf* *f*

pp *mf* *f*

rall.

20

Ruben Zahra

Passju

Passju is a children's game, better known as "hopscotch" and traditionally played by girls rather than boys. The girls hop across the 9 sections of a pattern which is usually marked on the ground with chalk. In the music, the hands of the pianist "hop" over each other, just like in the game of *Passju*. The rhythmic pattern shifts across different registers up and down the keyboard, which makes it an ideal piece to learn from memory.

Exercise

The musical score for the exercise "Passju" is presented in two systems. The first system consists of two staves, both in bass clef, with a 4/4 time signature. The second system consists of two staves, with the upper staff in treble clef and the lower staff in bass clef, also in 4/4 time. The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and quarter notes, with various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and rests. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Passju

Ruben Zahra
b. 1972

$\text{♩} = 144$

mf 8^{vb}-----
8^{vb}-----

6 *mf* 8^{vb}-----
8^{vb}-----

11 *mf* 8^{va}-----
8^{va}-----

16 *f* 8^{va}-----
8^{va}-----

21 (8^{va})-----
(8^{va})----- *ff* *mf* *f* 8^{vb}
8^{vb}



Christopher Muscat

Homage to Béla Bartók

Homage to Béla Bartók is a short prelude from a set of six (collectively referred to as *Album for the Young*) composed by Christopher Muscat as a tribute to six important composers who were of determining importance in the development of the music throughout the twentieth century. The irregularly grouped time signature (3+2+2+3) is a clear reference to Bartók's interest in the folk music of his native Hungary and the neighbouring Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Serbia. This short work is similar to a *moto perpetuo* (a piece of fast-moving music consisting mainly of notes of equal length) with constantly shifting accents. The suggested study is intended to help the student understand the concept of shifting accents.

Exercise

$\text{♩} = 100, \text{♩} = 150$



The exercise is written for piano in the key of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked with a 3+2+2+3 time signature. The right hand plays a melody of eighth notes, and the left hand plays a bass line of eighth notes. The second system is marked with a '4' above the staff, indicating a change in the exercise's structure. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with many accents in both hands.

Homage to Béla Bartók

Christopher Muscat
b. 1977

$\downarrow = 100, \downarrow = 150$

mp

4

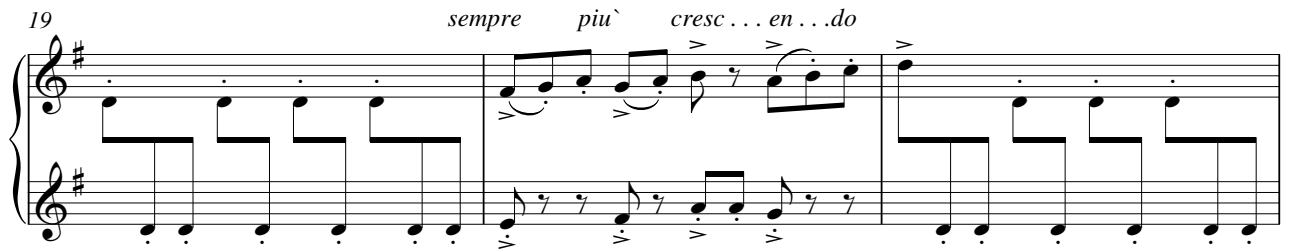
7

10 *f*

13 *pp*

16 *cresc... en... do poco a poco*

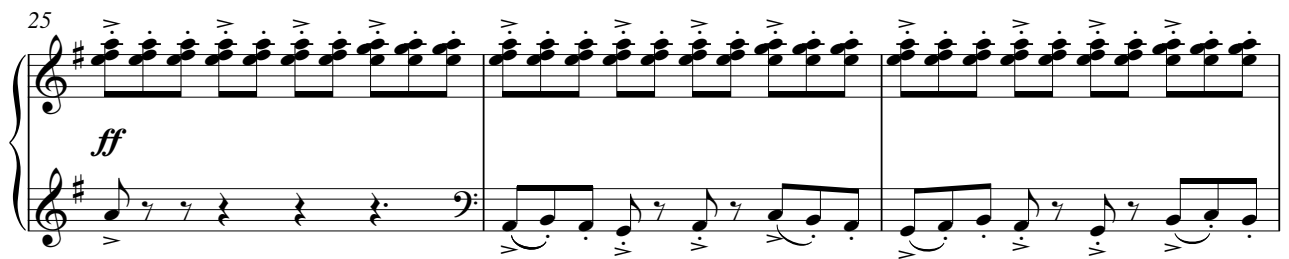
19 *sempre piu' cresc... en...do*



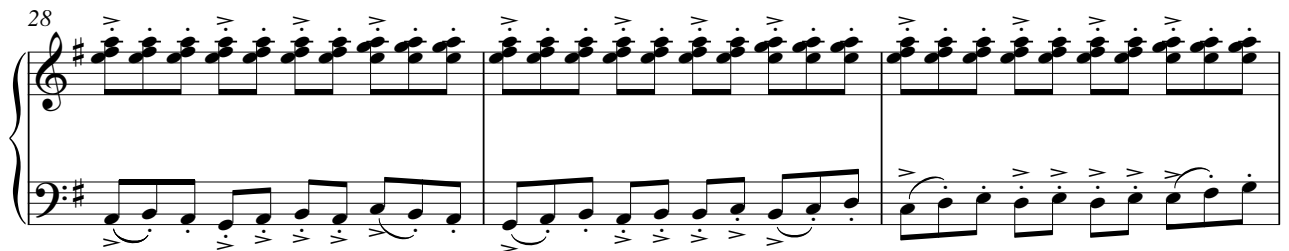
22



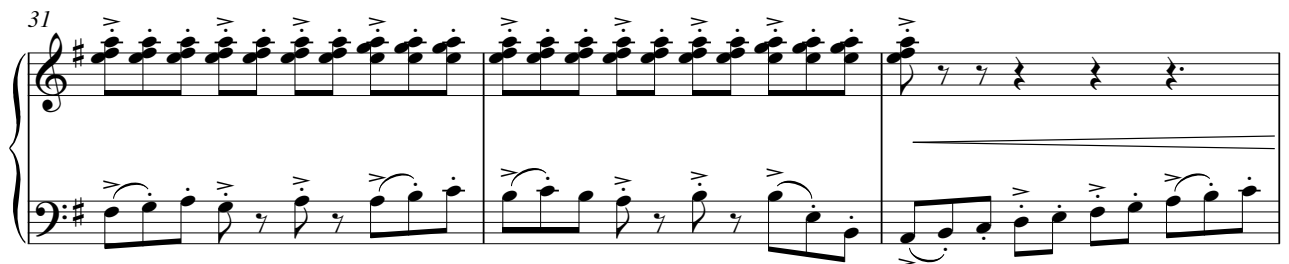
25 *ff*



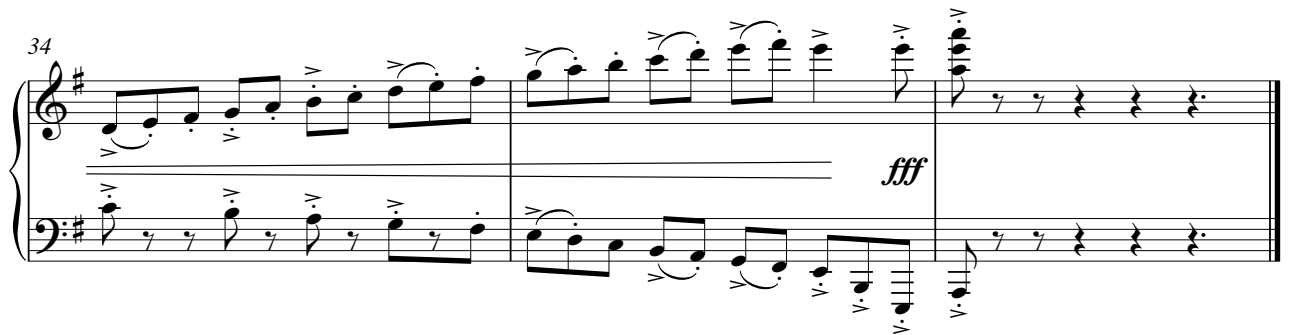
28



31



34 *fff*





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Albert Garzia

... and don't forget to smile!

The name *and don't forget to smile!* is a sort of catchphrase that came up while composing the piece (some passages require a certain level of "concentration"). This is not to say that the piece is about seriousness at all. Although mechanical in gesture, the music is meant to be playful in character somehow reminiscent of a half-broken toy. Rhythm and attitude are particularly important in the performance of the piece nevertheless, a smile would certainly make the ultimate topping.

... and don't forget to smile!

Albert Garzia
b. 1977

♩ = 84

8^{va}-----

mf mp f

5 f mf

8 mp mf mp

11 mf f mf mp

15 mf

3/4 4/4

19

mp *mf* *mp*

23

f

27

mf *f* *mf*

cluster cluster

8va

32

mp *mf* *mp*

36

mf *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *mp*

3



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Mariella Cassar-Cordina

One Day in November

One Day in November is a piece for piano that gives the pianist the lead way to share personal reflections of a typical winter day, revolving around a pre-set narrative. The introduction sets the basis of the story line; starting on an agitated semi-quaver scalic pattern, resolving into a calmer and smoother, almost ethereally section. This suggests that even in a stormy day one can find peace and serenity through one's own space and self-reflection. In the following section thunder strikes again, paving the way to the end section, leading the listener to delve into a tranquil, almost dreamy ending.

Exercise

Andante
♩ = c. 80

mp

rall.

Fingerings for the right hand: 3 1, 3 2, 5 1, 5 3 1, 5 4 4, 2 2 2, 1 1 1.

Fingerings for the left hand: 1 2, 1 4 1 5 1, 2 1 3 1, 2 - 1, 2 2, 1.

Left hand bass line: 5, 3 3 5, 5, 4 3 5.

Dynamics: **mp**, **mf**, crescendo/decrescendo hairpin.

One Day in November

Mariella Cassar
b. 1972

Light and Brisk
♩ = c. 84

Musical score for measures 1-5. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats. Measure 1 is a whole rest. Measures 2-5 feature a piano accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern in the bass and chords in the treble. Dynamics include *p*, *f*, and *mp*. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5.

Meno mosso
♩ = c. 72

Musical score for measures 6-10. The tempo is *Meno mosso*. Measure 6 is marked *ff*. Measures 7-10 are marked *p* and *mp*. The instruction "as legato as possible" is written above the treble staff. The bass staff has a simple harmonic accompaniment. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5.

Musical score for measures 11-15. The piece continues with a piano accompaniment. Measures 11-15 are marked *p* and *mf*. The bass staff has a simple harmonic accompaniment. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5.

Musical score for measures 16-20. The piece continues with a piano accompaniment. Measures 16-20 are marked *p* and *mp*. The bass staff has a simple harmonic accompaniment. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5.

Musical score for measures 21-25. The piece continues with a piano accompaniment. Measures 21-25 are marked *p* and *mp*. The bass staff has a simple harmonic accompaniment. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5.

26 *mp*

31 *mp*
mf

35 *mp*
mf

A tempo
♩ = c. 84 *loco*
39 *f*

42 *mf*
Meno mosso
♩ = c. 72 *f*

45 *rall.* *ad lib.* *pp*



Véronique Vella

Jagged Jig

Jagged Jig is a quirky, little piece having many accented notes, syncopated chords, and quick octave leaps. The piece is split up into four sections and shifts quite happily between major and minor chords. A descending chromatic motif brings the first section to a close at bar 10. We then have a variation of the initial theme in E minor which is rudely interrupted giving way to a contrasting section in the Dorian mode. With its legato melody line and meandering left hand accompaniment, we are briefly transported to a sparkling, dreamy place ... but not before long, we are shaken back to reality when the 'jagged motif' we heard in the opening returns! The piece ends with growling left hand notes at the lower register of the piano.

Exercise

♩ = 100

The exercise is written for piano and consists of two systems. The first system is for the Piano and is in 4/4 time. It begins with a tempo marking of ♩ = 100. The piano part features a melody with triplets and syncopated rhythms. The dynamics are marked *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The second system is for the Pno. (Piano) and is also in 4/4 time. It features a more complex melody with triplets and syncopated rhythms. The dynamics are marked *f* (forte) and *ff* (fortissimo). The piece concludes with a final chord in the lower register of the piano.

Jagged Jig

Véronique Vella
b. 1979

Allegro vivo ♩ = c. 160

Musical notation for measures 1-4. The piece is in 4/4 time. The first system consists of two staves. The upper staff has a treble clef and the lower staff has a bass clef. Dynamics include *mf* and *p*. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Musical notation for measures 5-8. The second system consists of two staves. Dynamics include *mf* and *p*. There are markings for *8va* (octave up) in the upper staff. The key signature has one flat.

Musical notation for measures 9-12. The third system consists of two staves. Dynamics include *mp* and *f*. Performance markings include *loco*, *poco rit.*, and **Tempo Primo**. There are *ped.* (pedal) markings and asterisks in the bass staff. The key signature has one flat.

Musical notation for measures 13-16. The fourth system consists of two staves. Dynamics include *f*. There are *ped.* markings and asterisks in the bass staff. The key signature has one flat.

Musical notation for measures 17-20. The fifth system consists of two staves. Dynamics include *ff* and *pp*. Performance markings include *dolce*. There are *ped.* markings and asterisks in the bass staff. The key signature has one flat.

22

mp

*leg. * leg. * leg. * leg. * simile*

26

8va

loco

mf

secco

ff

30

mf

34

8va

8va

38

loco

ff

8va

fff

*leg. * leg. * leg. * leg. * 8va*



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