

Béla Bartók

MIKROKOSMOS

153 Progressive Piano Pieces, Sz. 107

(Volume 3: Nos. 67–96)

Edited by

Nicholas Hopkins

CARL FISCHER®

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INTRODUCTION

The thirty pieces and thirteen supplementary exercises of Volume 3 of Béla Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* introduce students to the intermediate level of piano playing. The composer observed that the material in the first three volumes was "...designed to be sufficient in itself for the first, or first and second, year of study." However, in view of the technical and interpretive challenges of many of these pieces, Volume 3 is more in line with the demands of Volume 4, than of Volumes 1 and 2. Moreover, the pieces in Volume 3 show greater evidence of the composer's personal voice than in preceding volumes through the increased presence of elements of indigenous folk song and twentieth-century idioms. Clearly, the collection as a whole is a valuable introduction to and preparation for the composer's concert works, as well as a welcome exposure to a variety of musical styles.

The progression from Volumes 2 to 3—"progression" being a key word with the intent of this collection—is undertaken in an exceptionally methodical way by continuing with and expanding on concepts in the earlier volumes and gradually introducing new ones. One of the principal objectives of Volume 2, fostering independence of the hands, likewise becomes an important objective in Volume 3, largely by means of emphasis on polyphonic textures and imitative writing. Canons, for example, abound, as in "Wandering" (No. 81) and the "Chromatic Invention No. 1" (No. 91). The busy "Homage to J.S. Bach" (No. 79) and "Chromatic Invention No. 2" (No. 92) look back to Bach's Two-part Inventions by composing two independent, though related parts that force the student to function in two differing dimensions at the same time.

Independence of the hands is realized in other ways in Volume 3. "Chord Study" (No. 69) is a one-minute exercise in melody and accompaniment, both composed according to differing principles and both demanding to be executed in differing ways. "Melody against Double Notes" (No. 70) challenges the student with a right-hand passage in F#-Mixolydian and a left-hand passage in D-Dorian; pieces composed according to two differing modes with the hands in close proximity on the keyboard will be recalled in Volumes 4 and 5. Both studies also foster development and dexterity of the left hand, and this objective is continued in the G-Dorian "Little Study" (No. 77), which bears a striking resemblance to No. 137 ("Unison") from Volume 5.

The composer also introduces studies that explore playing in more than two parts, although a two-part texture predominates in this volume, as in Volumes 1 and 2. Study No. 76 focuses on playing in three parts, first with two parts in the left hand and one part in the right hand, then two parts in the right hand and one

part in the left hand. Playing in four parts is introduced in No. 86 ("Two Major Pentachords") and continued in Nos. 89 and 93, each of which features a progressively greater independence of the parts. Other pieces, such as "In Russian Style" (No. 90) and "A Tale" (No. 94), explore textures based on a varying number of parts, from two to four.

In line with pieces in Volume 3 that feature three- and four-part writing are those pieces composed according to specific intervals and chords. Volume 3 opens with a study that focuses on performing parallel thirds in both hands, which is resumed in a more concentrated way in No. 71. Intervals of the sixth, and major and minor triads are inevitably exploited in No. 73, and the composer is mindful to provide exercises in the Appendix that focus specifically on the technical demands of this form of playing. Dissonant chord formations will be found in the bouncing "Scherzo" (No. 82), "Melody with Interruptions" (No. 83) and "Merriment" (No. 84), all of which closely resemble the idiosyncratic piano writing in the composer's concert works.

Bartók also designed Volume 3 to introduce the student to a number of new concepts in notation. Sixteenth-note rhythms make their initial appearance in Volume 3 in the "Little Study" (No. 77); eighth notes, however, remain the fundamental rhythmic unit in this volume. Triplet rhythms, although introduced in Volume 2, are continued in No. 75 and recalled only in a few instances thereafter; curiously, tuplets of any kind play only a minor part in the subsequent volumes. Two new time signatures will be found. $\frac{7}{8}$ first appears in the "Scherzo" (No. 82), although it is restricted to the opening four measures (it will be used with greater frequency in No. 113 of Volume 4). $\frac{2}{2}$ is the second new signature and appears far more frequently and consistently in Nos. 71, 72, 76, 89 and 90. Exercise No. 20 is composed according to a surprising compound meter of $\frac{3+3+2}{8}$, an unusual formation for an intermediate level that will not be found until the "Bulgarian-rhythm" pieces of Volume 6. Additionally, many of the pieces in Volume 3 feature alternating time signatures with far greater frequency than the preceding volume; the interpretive challenges of this practice seem to be the main objectives of the "Scherzo" (No. 82) and "A Tale" (No. 94). The notation of beams to show specific metric units, a crucial notational practice in the composer's concert works, is first introduced in this volume and will be recalled in later volumes. This would explain the unusual beaming patterns in "Homage to Robert Schumann" (No. 80, perhaps influenced by the second movement of Schumann's *Fantasy in C Major*, Op. 17 and various pieces in *Carnaval*, Op. 9) and those beams that cross barlines in Nos. 81, 91 and 92.

Volume 3 continues with the composer's notation of unique key signatures that were introduced in Volumes 1 and 2. Traditional key signatures may be found in seven of the studies (Nos. 71, 77, 80, 84, 94, 95 and 96), with the majority of the pieces composed without key signature, as with all of the pieces in Volume 6. In other instances, unorthodox key signatures will be found, as in Nos. 68, 70, 76, 79 and 82. Study No. 89 ("In Four Parts No. 1") presents an unusual signature of C# and G#, which occurs in no other instance in this collection. Additionally, there are no changes of key in any of the pieces in this volume; No. 104 of Volume 4 is the first piece to feature this. "Duet for Pipes" (No. 88) stands out in Volume 3 for introducing the double flat (m. 19); the double sharp will not be encountered until No. 102 of Volume 4.

Specifications for the damper pedal, first introduced in No. 47 of Volume 2, are resumed in Volume 3, although these specifications remain relatively few. They become increasingly explicit in subsequent volumes, yet the question remains if the composer did not want pedal to be used in instances in which it was not indicated. Studies Nos. 83 and 84 in Volume 3 are devoted specifically to the pedal's role in establishing a specific timbre through overlapping changing harmonies. Exercise No. 22 is an illustration, like Exercise No. 11 of Volume 2, of the proper application of the pedal: Its depression occurs immediately after the sounding of a note or chord, and its release overlaps slightly with that which follows (i.e., legato pedaling).

Lastly, all of the tempo markings in Volume 3, as in Volumes 1 and 2, feature common Italian terminology combined with metronome markings. The terminology becomes increasingly explicit in Volume 3, with Italian qualifiers that elaborate on the composer's intent. The student will encounter such unique terms as "con spirito," "risoluto," "piacevole," and the less common term "robusto." Metronome values (such as ♩ = 125 and 136) are notated that will not be readily found on traditional metronomes. What is new in Volume 3 with regard to tempo is that multiple tempos will be found in the course of a single piece. The changes of tempo in Nos. 71, 87 and 89 will not be found in the preceding volumes, and the extended *rallentando* in No. 95 (mm. 11–17), accompanied by a call for increased tranquility, is a performance challenge that is unique to this volume. Ranges in metronome markings are specified in three instances in Volume 3, as in Nos. 69, 90 and 93, suggesting that the composer agrees to a certain degree of flexibility with technically challenging pieces. Interestingly, the metronome marking in No. 69 specifies the slower tempo first; in Nos. 90 and 93, the faster tempo first.

Durations, ranging from twenty-seven seconds to one minute twenty seconds, are given for each piece, as with all pieces in the six volumes. The total duration of the pieces in Volume 3 is approximately twenty-five minutes, thus slightly longer than the twenty-two minutes of Volume 1 and twenty-one minutes of Volume 2.

—Nicholas Hopkins

COMPOSER'S PREFACE TO THE SIX VOLUMES

The first four volumes of *Mikrokosmos* were written to provide study material for the beginning pianist— young or adult—and are intended to cover, as far as possible, most of the simple technical problems likely to be encountered in the early stages. The material in Volumes 1–3 has been designed to be sufficient in itself for the first, or first and second, year of study. These three books differ from a conventional “piano method” in that technical and theoretical instructions have been omitted, in the belief that these are more appropriately left for the teacher to explain to the student. In many instances a number of pieces are provided which relate to similar specific problems: Teachers and students thus have an opportunity to make their own selection. In any case it is neither necessary, nor perhaps even possible or permissible, for every student to learn all ninety-six pieces.

To facilitate the teacher's task, exercises are included in an appendix to each of the four volumes. The numbers in parentheses next to each exercise number indicate the pieces containing problems to which the exercise relates. Sometimes the same technical problem is dealt with in more than one exercise. Again, the teacher should make a selection according to the student's ability, giving the more difficult exercises to the more able student and the easier ones to those with less skill. These exercises should be studied some time in advance of, and not immediately before, attempting to learn the pieces containing the related problems. It will be obvious that no really elementary exercises have been included, e.g. five-finger exercises, thumb under, simple broken triads, etc.; in this respect, too, there has been a departure from the customary “piano-method” approach. In any event, every teacher will be familiar with suitable exercises at this level and will be able to judge what the student can play.

The progressive sequence of the pieces and exercises as to technical and musical difficulty is only an approximation; the teacher may modify the given order taking account, as appropriate, of the student's ability. The metronome markings and indicated durations should be regarded only as guides, particularly in Volumes 1–3; the first few dozen pieces may be played at a faster or slower tempo as circumstances dictate. As progress is made, the tempos should be considered as less variable, and in volumes 5 and 6, tempo indications must be adhered to. An asterisk (*) next to the number of a piece means that a corresponding explanatory note will be found in the volume.

A second piano part has been provided for four pieces: Nos. 43, 44, 55 (from Volume 2) and 68 (from Volume 3). It is important that students begin ensemble-

playing at the earliest possible stage. Of course, the pieces written for two pianos can only be used in a classroom-teaching situation where, as they should be, two pianos are available. Four other pieces, Nos. 65 (from Volume 2), 74, 95 (from Volume 3) and 127 (from Volume 5) are written as songs with piano accompaniment. All instrumental study or training should really commence with the student singing. Where this has been the case, the performance of pieces for voice and piano should not be hard to accomplish. Such pieces offer very useful practice in reading three staves instead of two, the student singing while playing the accompaniment at the same time. To make things easier, solo piano versions of Nos. 74 and 95 (from Volume 3) have also been supplied. This version should be learned first, and only afterwards should the student turn to the version for voice and piano. Various performance possibilities for No. 65 will be found in the Appendix to Volume 2.

Work on Volume 4 may—indeed should—be combined with the study of other compositions such as the *Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach* by J. S. Bach, appropriate studies by Czerny, etc. Transposition of the simpler pieces and exercises into other keys is recommended. Even transcription of suitable pieces from Volumes 1–3 may be attempted. Only “strict” transposition is implied here, for instance, at first, double octaves as on a harpsichord. Additionally, certain pieces could be played on two pianos an octave apart, e.g. Nos. 45, 51, 56 (from Volume 2), etc. More adventurous modifications might be attempted such as simplifying the accompaniment to No. 69 from Volume 3:



although the adaption of mm. 10–11, 14–15, 22–23, 26–27, 30 and 32–33 may call for a fair amount of mental agility. Many more opportunities exist in this area: Their proper solutions should be dictated by the teacher's or the more resourceful student's ingenuity.

And while on the subject of transcription, it may be noted that some pieces—among easier ones, Nos. 76, 77, 78, 79, 92 (from Volume 3) and 104b (from Volume 4); among the more difficult Nos. 117, 118 (from Volume 4), 123 (from Volume 5) and 145 (from Volume 6)—are suitable for playing on the harpsichord. On this instrument, doubling octaves is achieved by registration.

Finally, attention is drawn to another application of *Mikrokosmos*: More advanced students may find the pieces useful as sight-reading material.

—Béla Bartók

MIKROKOSMOS

153 Progressive Piano Pieces, Sz. 107
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BÉLA BARTÓK
(1881–1945)

Thirds against a Single Voice

Andante ♩ = 110

67

p

1

3

1

8

8

8

5

9

13

[35 sec.]

Hungarian Dance

Allegro con spirito ♩ = 125

Piano 1

f

1

2

3/5 *sempre legato*

68*

Allegro con spirito ♩ = 125

Piano 2

f

1

4

3

1

2

3

2

* Composer's Note: No. 68 can be played without the second piano part.

8

2

4

2

3

2

5

4

2

12

4

2

[30 sec.]

Chord Study

Moderato ♩. = 80–84

69 *p* *mf cantabile*

4 *simile*

7

10

2

The image displays a page of a musical score for 'The Swan' by Camille Saint-Saëns. It features four systems of music, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system, starting at measure 69, includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking and a *mf cantabile* instruction. The second system, starting at measure 73, is marked *simile*. The third system starts at measure 77, and the fourth system starts at measure 81. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and fingerings (e.g., 1, 3, 5, 2). A large, light gray watermark is visible across the page.

14

p

18

simile

f

mf cantabile

22

p

f

p

mp

27

f

32

f

f

mp

[1 min.]

Melody against Double Notes

Adagio ♩ = 66

70

sopra
1

f espr.

sotto
p $\frac{2}{4}$

5

10

p

f espr.

15

mf

p espr.

p espr.

calando

pp

[1 min. 8 sec.]

Thirds

Grave $\text{♩} = 66$

71 *f*

6 *sf*

Un poco più mosso $\text{♩} = 80$

12 *ff* *f*

Tempo I

19

Un poco più mosso $\text{♩} = 80$

25 *ff* *p*

Tempo I

32 *ff*