FIVE ITALIAN FOLK SONG SETTINGS FOR USE BY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL PIANO TRIO GROUPS

by

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PROJECT
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

For many years the development of supplementary materials for string method books has been stressed as one of the most important aims in the advancement of small ensemble groups.

The primary purpose of this project was to provide musical material for junior high school piano trio ensembles which could afford opportunity to develop creative realizations of music as an outgrowth of principles learned in standard string class method books: a secondary aim was to provide supplementary music for repertorial enrichment.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The project consists of: (1) a short summary of such musical source material as is readily available to school groups; (2) a statement of the technical proficiencies for violin and cello of junior high school level as determined from a selective list of standard instruction books; (3) the pedagogical considerations of the transcriptions used for this project; (4) as an appendix, the musical transcriptions.

Importance of the study. The musical selections
developed in this study should assist in the appreciation and enjoyment of piano trio groups through the student's performance. Through ensemble playing, the students can develop a good concept of chamber music, a concept which can lead to richly rewarding experiences for the remainder of the pupil's life. This study will help to open new musical vistas to violin and cello students through the cooperative attainment of the creative evolution of musical devices unique to the chamber music style.

More graded ensemble literature is needed which the junior high school student enjoys playing and which has more audience appeal. The purpose of ensemble playing would be served if the literature were of good graded quality.

In ensemble playing each part possesses its own individual interest. This is one of the reasons that an intellectual pleasure is experienced while participating in a group such as this.

Another point to bear in mind is that the small group is an effective means of connecting school music and home music. The ensemble yields the greatest enjoyment in stages of performance where the individual pupil has gained enough skill so that when he plays alone on a part he can play with enough confidence to produce a good tone. Even in the earlier stages of group playing it is good fun and also excellent musical training. Participation teaches
responsibility and each one can hear the effect of his own playing. It is valuable educationally and socially. It brings small groups together, concentrates attention upon correct intonation, reading, and tone quality. All these objectives are to a large extent missing in the case of larger orchestra organizations.

The source of the transcriptions is an Italian edition of folk-songs. After reviewing a great quantity of source material this collection was chosen because of its freshness, simplicity, and adaptability for the instrumental combination.

The aim was not merely to promote technical efficiency in the transcriptions but to mark the necessary fingerings, bowing and marks of interpretation.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Bowings:

Legato. This consists of 2 basic strokes; down-bow \( \downarrow \) and up-bow \( \uparrow \). In down-bow, the arm is moved away from the body, while in up-bow, the arm moves towards the body. The slur indicates the number of notes to be taken in a single stroke.

\[ \text{Schinelli, Achille, editor, Canti Popolari Italian. Milano: Edizioni Suvini-Zerboni, 1952.} \]
Detached. A broad vigorous stroke in which notes of equal time value are bowed singly with a slight articulation caused by the rapid change of bow. This stroke is much used for loud passages of not too great speed. Sometimes it is indicated by lines under or above the notes as in the example.

Spiccato. A short stroke played in rapid tempo in the middle of the bow in such a way that the bow bounces slightly from the string. This stroke requires good control on the part of the performer in order to keep it steady. It is a most brilliant effect and can range from pianissimo to fortissimo. It is indicated by dots as in the example.

Staccato. This is a solo effect and theoretically consists of a number of martellato notes taken in the same stroke. It can be executed with dazzling brilliance either up-bow or down-bow, but the latter is more difficult.

Portato. A succession of regular legato, individually articulated, but smoothly connected tones in one bow direction.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Many authorities have reviewed techniques and methods for individual string instruments, but little has been written regarding supplementary material for piano trio. The chief concern in this project is to treat technique and methods for violin and cello.

Kinds of Literature. Before deciding on the source for the transcriptions, an extended search through collections for material of excellent quality and easy adaptability was made. Canti Popolari Italiani was chosen because of its adequacy to be useful in dealing with the problems of technical proficiency.

The National Interscholastic Music Activity Commission set forth a suitable list of small ensemble music. This list offers many favorable arrangements but very little for the piano group, at the junior high school level.

Other selections reviewed were of the incidental background type, with very little technical challenges.

Compositions from the standard piano trio repertoire were also reviewed and found too difficult for this

1^2 Loc. cit.

level.

The materials which set forth the criteria in making the transcriptions were the junior high school string methods books.

Review of the Literature. In determining the difficulty and content of the transcriptions it was decided to let the more commonly employed string methods books be the deciding factor. In order to implement this course of action, ten current string class methods books are representative of the field. There was no question here concerning the validity or pedagogical effectiveness of any of the books, the question being merely to determine, if possible, the attainment which could be reasonably expected from junior high school students whose training and background are the end result of class instruction in string music. Having selected ten class methods, the contents of each method were inspected to determine the average attainment under the following headings: (1) positions, (2) bowings, (3) ranges, (4) rhythms, (5) special effects.

The string class methods books selected as a representative sample were:


Dasch, George and Aileen Bennett. The Aeolian String Ensemble Method (Fitzsimons), 1936.

Fischel, Max and Aileen Bennett. *Gamble's Class Method for Strings* (Remick), 1931.


Isaac, Merle. *String Class Method.* (M. M. Cole), 1940.

Jones, Edwin, George Dasch, Max Krone. *Strings from the Start.* (Carl Fischer), 1937.


Waller, Gilbert. *Waller String Class Method.* (Kjos), 1941.

Whistler, Harvey and Herman Hummel. *String Time.* (Rubank), 1949.

Several of these methods books have second and third volumes, and it was necessary to examine these in certain cases to determine if the level of advancement was intended for junior high school or lower grade levels. On the basis of the above methods books, the following criteria were determined as minimum.

1. Positions I through V on all strings.

2. Bowings to include *legato, detache, spiccato, staccato,* and *portato.*

3. Special effects of *pizzicato* and natural harmonics on octave on any string.

To the above attainments the following performance devices were added to this project as being well within the grasp of the students:
1. Bowing over the fingerboard (*sul tast*).
2. Easy first position double-stops for cello.
3. Use of mutes (optional).
CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM OF TRANSCRIPTIONS

The following points were considered first in making the transcriptions themselves: (1) selection of songs, (2) the style, or texture, of the two-voice framework, (3) the adaptability of the selected songs to an even dissemination of dynamics, tempos, expression marks, and (4) a style of piano accompaniment.

The selection of the songs called for consideration of the direct melodic appeal for the student. In order that the songs could be played consecutively, as a suite, contrast in tempo, style, and mood were sought. The idiomatic structure of the song was not a hindrance because all the songs, being folk songs, present no problems of sophisticated techniques to be adapted for a particular instrument. It was necessary, however, to select material which could be played an octave higher or lower than written, in order that the full range of left-hand techniques could be applied. In considering style, or texture, of the two voice framework, every effort was made to write two-part music which is satisfying without the piano accompaniment inasmuch as the problem of procuring an accompanist is often a difficult matter for school children. The melodies selected were viewed according to the contrapuntal possibilities, inclu-
The melody of the folk song itself had to be assigned alternately to the violin and cello. An especially important device, which is not counterpoint, is unison and octave playing. This technic of chamber music teaches, perhaps better than any other, a concept of intonation. Bowings, phrasings, dynamics, and other marks of expression were carefully added to enable the teacher and student to learn these standard terms and how they help create a musical sound from notation. It should be remembered at all times, however, that no editorial marks are hard and fast set rules which must be adhered to in every case. Rather, the teacher (and subsequently the student) should adapt such markings whenever a specifically musical demand must be met.

The problems of piano accompaniments have been a perennial one for school musicians. Many junior high pupils have had piano lessons for a few years, but, in general, none of these children understand the basis of accompaniment. The fact is that an accompaniment, no matter how simple, must be handled in an adroit and subtle manner, a manner which is learned through experience and mature musicianship. It would be considered better to have a mature musician with little pianistic ability than to have a fine pianist with little understanding of accompaniment. Though it is unlikely that the string players will find
either type of musician in the public school, the fact of simple music to be played with good musicianship was the ultimate consideration in writing the accompaniments. Moreover, the style of accompaniment is such that the students who have a relative at home who has had musical training but has long since ceased to be a technician, will have an adequate accompanist.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYTICAL NOTES ON THE TRANSCRIPTION

The Dance of the Little Fish moves quickly, Allegro con brio, and the rhythm and tempo are consistent throughout. The meter is six-eight. Bowings used are detache, portato, and staccato. The violin utilizes the first and third positions, and the cello plays in the first, second, and third positions. Melodic leads are given alternately to cello and violin, with the other instrument playing a countermelody.

Why? My Beautiful Anna is arranged as a theme and variations: (1) Theme, (2) Variation I, pizzicato, (3) Minor mode, (4) Cello solo with violin descant. The variations offer different tempos and expression markings, and experience is provided for teaching pupils how to play accompanimental figures for rather extended periods of time taking due account of the needs of the principal melodic line.

This is the only composition calling for a heavy, loud bowing (pesante). The range for violin extends through three octaves and that for cello through two. The violin uses the first through fifth position and the cello the first, third, and fourth. A unison passage appears in the first variation, and double-stops, pizzicato, and octave harmonics
also appear.

The Farewell begins Larghetto in three-eight meter. Violin and cello begin with the portato style of bowing followed in the second section by staccato strokes. Both instruments stay within a compass of two octaves, the violin using the first and third positions, the cello using the first through the fourth. Grace notes and pizzicato appear frequently.

How Wonderful an Adventure! is a flowing Andantino in six-eight meter. The cello has a pizzicato accompaniment figure which must fit carefully with the legato melody of the violin. In the repetition of the theme, the cello joins the violin legato style with an independent counter-melody. The violin is restricted to the first and third positions while the cello plays in the first position only. This composition is intended to focus attention on the expressive aspects of string music.

The Shining Window is a warmly expressive selection in twelve-eight meter, marked Andantino expressivo. It is similar in technical attainment to The Farewell, except the cello reads in the tenor clef part of the time. The violin is restricted to the first position.
As suggested above, none of the expression marks need be regarded as absolute restrictions on style. An excellent project in creative musicianship could be devised by the teacher wherein the students could attempt to play the selections in different styles and moods as the result of their own application of the interpretive devices. For example, many of the first position passages could be played in upper positions on lower strings creating an effect which is different. It would have to be the final choice of the student as to whether or not the style suits the particular kind of music, and much speculation on what kind of style is appropriate could be stimulated by the alert instructor. Also, one could experiment with the comparative effectiveness of portato and staccato bowing styles. The ultimate goal here is to instill the sensitivity to style which all string musicians must have, and the final proof of the pudding is in the pupil's ability to play unedited music well.

Music, being an art in its own right, can be described verbally only up to a certain point. Beyond this point the music, itself, is its own expression which cannot be translated into other terms. The public school musician
seldom arrives at the point where such autonomous expression is understood, nor can we reasonably expect that all pupils achieve the musical maturity necessary for this level of comprehension; yet, through the creative experience of music in manner of the chamber style the pupil can make his first significant steps toward this goal.

Admittedly, these transcriptions are addressed to the superior junior high school musician, students who require more music than provided within the ordinary classroom situation and who often fail to give utterance to their strong demand for such music. These students must be sought out by the teacher and given every chance to grow.
APPENDIX
BIBLIOGRAPHY


