

Creativity: *Each of City Set's four pieces offers students a stimulating departure point for their own musical creativity, as do selections throughout the Recital Series.*

CITY SET - Dr. Marion Verhaalen, SSSF (Mary Verne)

Hear Mp3 Sample:

Tall Buildings / Pedlar & the Bird / Carnival / Whirlibird

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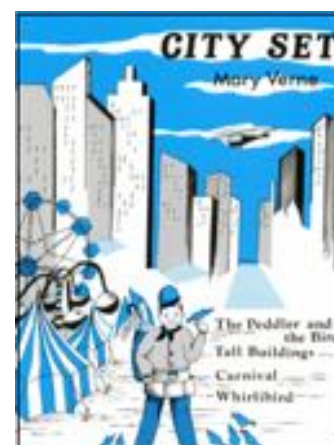
Tall Buildings / Pedlar & the Bird / Carnival / Whirlibird

THE PEDLAR AND THE BIRD

Students love the four musical “cityscapes” in City Set. Here are some “Building Blocks” for students to discover and explore.

Short, easy patterns, plus simple pedal indications, make this piece a favorite for beginners. Students enjoy portraying the piece's pedlar (m. 1, etc.) and bird (m. 3, etc.) motifs.

Pedlar and the Bird is easy to learn when students discover that the entire composition is created from only two intervals -- fifths in the left hand on D and on E-flat, and thirds in the right hand on G-flat.

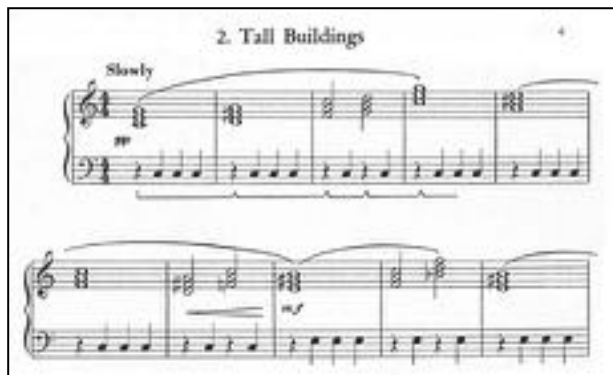


Ask students to look for repeated figures and register-changes in this bitonal composition. To encourage students' interpretive skills, discuss possible reasons for the piece's title, indications of “heavily,” decrescendo and “slower,” in the piece's closing. Ask which motif is mostly 5/4, and which is 3/4?

With the alternating 5/4–3/4 meter, students can practice feeling the rhythm several ways. While clapping and, later, playing along, students may:

- Chant “quarter, quarter, quarter” and “h-a-l-f-n-o-t-e-d-o-t” with matching notes or rests,
- Count “1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 -” and “1 - 2 - 3” with the beats of each measure,
- Say: “left - right - right - left - right,” “left - right - right” or “left - hold - it” with the corresponding hand.

TALL BUILDINGS



Major chords played by the right hand in legato rising and falling phrases over a left-hand pedal point depict tall buildings from ground to sky in this effective A – B – A vignette.

As students learn Tall Buildings, help them discover elements that musically depict buildings and awe-inspiring “tallness.” These might include ascending and descending figures, increasing and decreasing dynamics, faster and slower motion, and other musical features.

- **Gazing Upward & Downward—Section A. m. 1- 7:** Anchors on C. Gradual crescendo, PP to MF, over C pedal point. Ascending opening phrase answered by a [mostly] descending second phrase.

- **Higher and Higher!—Section B. m. 8-11:**

Excitement builds—Anchor jumps from C to E. M. 8-9’s quick ascent to Bb major is repeated by m. 10-11, which moves even higher (by a half step) to B major. These two phrases borrow their contours from m. 3-4, reversing their rhythm to | ♩ | ♪ ♪ | instead of | ♪ ♪ | ♩ |.

- **Circling Back Around—Section A, m. 12-22**

Section A returns climactically. Its first two chords now play an octave higher than originally—creating Tall Building’s highest notes. Things then wind down. The remainder of this first phrase drops downward, finishing in its original, lower register. The next phrase’s answering descending chords lead to the close. Tall Building’s first measure now becomes the music’s last measures. M. 1 repeats, increasingly quietly, and then ends “in the distance” on low C and a high C major triad.



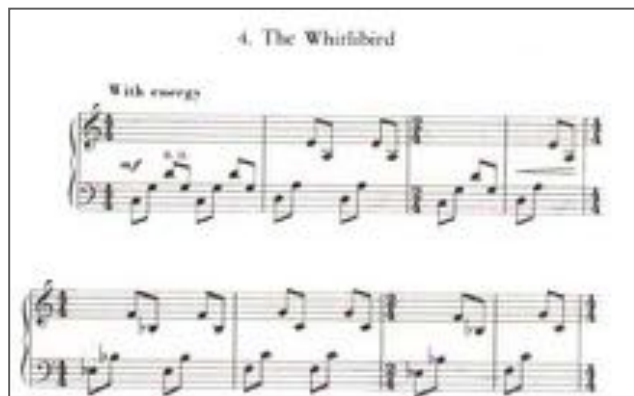
Carnival

This challenging but delightful piece features a quick-moving legato right hand and ostinato waltz bass. The bass pattern's slurred note pair followed by a staccato note implies that second and third beats should be lighter than downbeats.

Encourage students to find repeating and sequential patterns and also to notice where patterns “break away.” Call attention to the bitonal measures 10-13, where the right hand's C major against the left hand's F and E-flat fifths (mixolydian) create an “out of tune”

merry-go-round-music effect.

For those ready to use the metronome, a lively performance tempo can be developed by first practicing short sections at a slow eighth-note setting, hands alone and together, and steadily increasing the tempo and section lengths. Encourage students to listen for and try to create a carnival “merry-go-round” sound and feeling with their piano as they play this piece.



The Whirlbird

In this bitonal impression of a helicopter, right and left hands play broken fifths that move around C and then away, to cadence, finally, on D.

At first, ask students to play fifths in “block” (harmonic) instead of broken (melodic) form. This will help them see how their thumbs will share the same tone, as the right and left hands ascend and descend together in m. 1-8. Students should also observe that, from m. 9 to the end, the hands move in independent directions. Let them

note, for instance, the contrary motion in the last line. As with Carnival, a metronome set to eighths, and later, quarters, can be beneficial for building up the tempo of this 4/4-2/4 piece.

The meter changes between 4/4 and 2/4, along with the music's contours, can create a sense of the whirlbird's acceleration, deceleration, and direction changes as it flies. To help students feel the meter fluctuations, they can “play” Whirlbird in block fifths on the keyboard cover or a tabletop. As they play, they should count and accent in 4/4 and 2/4. They should also follow the music's dynamics, tapping more softly or loudly accordingly. This can be done in short sections, and beforehand, students should identify where their fifths will repeat in place, or move up, move down, get louder or softer, etc.

— Cynthia Pace —