

Introduction



Janis Norvilis (1906-1994) is Latvian composer, pianist, organist, conductor and music pedagogue, who was born on rural district nearby Madona-on the Vecsetas estate, in the township of Prauliena. In 1922 he gained admission to piano and organ classes at the Latvian Conservatoire in Riga. After Janis Norvilis progressed to Jazeps Vitols composition class, and Emil Kuper and Georg Schneevogt conducting class. Leaving the Latvian Conservatoire in 1930, Janis Norvilis seems to have decided to devote himself to composition and musical education.

From 1933 he became a member of Latvian Composers Union and embarked on a number of choral works, the music for theatre and the first Latvian sound movie during pre-Soviet Latvian independence. In 1926, 1931, 1933 and 1938 he founded and conducted choirs participated in four Latvian Song Festivals.

Janis Norvilis was one of the thousands of Latvian intellectuals who fled from native country before the Soviet Army, first in Western German, but from 1950 onward in Canada. In exile he worked as a church organist and choir conductor for English speaking and German speaking services. Janis Norvilis musical activities as composer expanded mainly in original works of vocal and instrumental music genres. His music is academic in the best sense of the term-in style and form it is restrained and clear.

In Canada Janis Norvilis continued to arrange Latvian folk songs for choirs and also made a manuscript of the collection of 33 folk tune adaptation for piano named Field of Songs (Dziesmu Druva). For a better understanding of the essence of the pieces, Janis Norvilis has included the corresponding Latvian folksong quatrains with the music. The major publisher in Latvia Musica Baltica was printed the first edition of Janis Norvilis Field of Songs: Latvian Folk Songs for Young Pianists (Riga, 2003, 60 p., ISMNM-706656-59-5).

This innovative learning material (Data CD) is designed for the use of professionally oriented music school piano pupils. The sheet music included in this learning material (Data CD) corresponds to the first edition of Janis Norvilis Field of Songs: Latvian Folk Songs for Young Pianists (2003). A soundtrack of each song is included, played by Nora Luse, recorded in Riga in 2011, on a Yamaha C piano.

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The preserved and rediscovered musical jewels of Latvians in exile are being made available to the public now, in print and sound. This rediscovered music heritage includes Janis Norvilis 33 folk tune adaptation for piano. In the genre of instrumental arrangements of Latvian folksongs, Janis Norvilis has ordered the pieces in a sequence of increasing difficulty. To help the progress of pupil piano skills, the 33 miniatures in the present learning material (Data CD or e-resource) are organized in the following way of three didactically consecutive levels:

Beginners' level (Nr.1-10),

Intermediate level (Nr.11-20, Nr.33),

Advanced level (Nr.21-32).

In the 33 folk tune adaptation, the non legato and legato techniques are presented both in separate and combined ways, always keeping in mind the relaxedness of pianist's hand (the syncopated half notes, fifths or whole notes at phrase endings serve a function of slowing-down punctuation marks). Janis Norvilis has used a changing combination of technical means of piano playing, where at least three different requirements are presented simultaneously (jumps, double-stops, repeats, chords, hand crossing, five-finger ascending scales).

Composer's music language offers an pitch-developing opportunity by listening to the several voices in the text – melodic echoing, imitations and sequences. Firstly, composer uses an associative method where he reinforces the poetic imagery of the music with the corresponding quatrains (in present learning material only in Latvian), thus aiding the emotional understanding and memorising of the pieces. Secondly, the diatonic clearness of Janis Norvilis folk tune adaptation is realized through the unity of pianistic movements and emotional content of the music.

The pieces encompass almost all possible piano touch techniques (legato, staccato, portato), scales and chords, jumps and trills, double-thirds and octaves, pedal use and rubato. Janis Norvilis has provided also fingering and musical character instructions, using terminology in Latvian (English glossary included). It is recommended to evaluate the given fingering suggestions, creating a fingering that is individually adapted to each pupil's hands.

By practicing the present folk songs, pupils can develop the colorfulness of their piano playing. For example, use the alternation of legato and staccato touch or contrasting piano-forte sound. Several arrangements imitate the sound of psaltery (for example Nr.15, Nr.20, Nr.24), which makes it possible to use the broken chord technique.

Different solutions are possible for the dynamic shaping of the pieces. In the folk songs, the musical depiction of the natural landscape is realized from "near" and "afar" – the contrast of perspectives is used. The interpretation will profit not only from echo effects, but also from dynamic plan of build-up with climax on the end of first verse and and decrease to the end. This enables the pupil to learn planning the dynamic sequence of the piece, an important spatial element of piano performance.

Beginners Level

1. Five years was I a servant
2. I sowed linen behind the hill
3. A rabbit dug in the field
4. Sun was playing psaltery
5. Oh dear Sun, please set soon, I am so tired
6. Singing in the peoples' field
7. Sway, ye forests
8. I went up the mountain to sing
9. Oh, God, the ploughman's life is good
10. Small girl was I, I didn't see my dear deceased parents

Intermediate Level

11. Five years was I a servant
12. I sowed linen behind the hill
13. A rabbit dug in the field
14. Sun was playing psaltery
15. Oh dear Sun, please set soon, I am so tired
16. Singing in the peoples' field
17. Sway, ye forests
18. I went up the mountain to sing
19. Oh, God, the ploughman's life is good
20. Small girl was I, I didn't see my dear deceased parents

Advanced Level

21. They all were summer solstice flowers
22. Let's make great summer solstice fires
23. Beat the drums, dear John
24. Little raven in the oak
25. White birches over the lake
26. Dance
27. Every morning rose the Sun
28. I promised my fellow countryman
29. God forbid the willow blooming white
30. The Sun is setting in the evening
31. River Daugava is foaming white
32. Neighbour's rye is growing up

Glossary

1. Faster - Ātrāk
2. Splendid - Krāšņi
3. More slowly - Lēnāk
4. Slowly - Lēni
5. Temperate - Mēreni
6. Unhurried - Nesteidzot
7. Slowly - Palēnām
8. Linked - Saistoši
9. Briskly – Spirgti
10. Narratively - Stāstoši