

## Ethno-Didactics in Piano Practicing: 50 Arrangements Solo

One of the roles international instrumental competitions fulfil in piano teaching is the one of providing an opportunity for intercultural contact. Piano competitions search for talented musicians in a procedure of demonstration and comparison of participants' skilfulness. Nowadays, competitions have become a significant form of the music education. The reform, currently taking place in Latvia music education, opens a new possibility for innovations also in the sphere of competitions for young musicians, according to the aim of the reform *to provide a wide availability of music and arts education to foster the development of creativity, support the national identity and maintain continuity and quality of the Song Festival tradition, ensuring the selection of talent and promoting their professional development and creative growth* (Reforming Cultural Education in Music and Arts: Development of Cultural Education 2009-2012, 2009: 2).

A competition for young musicians is a pedagogical reality which, according to the pedagogy research, unites three subjects in a relationship of co-dependence and mutual conditionality and necessity: pupils—the participants of the competition, their teachers and competition jurors as experts, who concentrate on the fulfilment of the competition requirements. In order to found a new sustainable music competition, it is essential to have an original, clearly formulated leading idea as well as call upon intercultural and international exchange of musicians.

The particularity of folk tunes as a phenomenon of cultural awareness is normally an integral part of musical education. Purposeful integration of folk tune arrangements into a competition program fastens the ethno-didactical trend of the competition. With this idea *Janis Norvilis International Competition for Young Pianists* was founded in Madona in 2011 (Lūse, 2011). In order to realize the ethno-didactical function of the competition and expand the cultural space, the *Riga International Competition for Young Pianists* was founded in 2012, which seeks to diversify the repertoire with forgotten and lesser known folk tune arrangements in piano music (see *General Rules of the Riga International Competition for Young Pianists*).

The uniqueness of folk tunes has since old been an integral part of the piano education for beginners, using arrangements and adaptations of folk song and dance tunes. Jēkabs Vītoliņš noted the conceptual orientation of folk tune arrangement genre as a mirror of means of musical expression in certain historical periods (Vītoliņš, 1970). Arnolds Klotiņš emphasizes the incorporation of folk tune elements into a new system of means of musical expression as a historical regularity of a certain period and still viable genre with actual communication (Klotiņš, 1973). Maruta Sīle describes the use of folk tune arrangements as a pedagogical tradition inherent to piano teaching practices in Latvia (Sīle, 2003).

Currently in Latvia folk tune arrangements are being used regularly and purposefully in the didactics at music school: teachers choose them to develop piano playing skills, to deepen the knowledge about ethnic diversity of the world, to cultivate tolerance, and to foster the creative initiative and imagination of the young pianists (Lūse, 2012).

Latvian folk tunes are being taught for piano solo as well as piano four hands. Exploring the musical visually-associative specifics of folk tunes, their didactical use strengthens the piano skills and enriches intellect, knowledge, and other personal cultural properties of the pupils. The didactical use of the folk tune arrangements in instrumental teaching at music schools contains

the transfer of ethic and emotional values and promotes the pupils' cultural awareness, as well as develops their imagination, perception, thinking and memory.

Considering cultural awareness as a whole, Latvian folk song arrangements offer hermeneutical understanding of folklore as a discovery of separate meanings and their interconnections for pupils. Such arrangements are carriers of Latvian cultural membership, in their unity of the folk quatrains and folk melodies. The ethno-didactics of music competition unite the interconnection between the components of the teaching-learning process, in which performance of folk tune arrangements plays the role of the key carrier of cultural awareness.

Ethno-didactics are defined as a goal-oriented folk tunes actualisation in the process of piano practicing, seeking to activate pupils' perception, memory, imagination and cognizance. The three principles of ethno-didactics are three practically approbated norms, which manifest themselves in piano playing as the principles of *visualizing*, *comprehensibility*, and *kinaesthetic*. Ethno-didactics as norms of piano practicing dictate the aim of training, as well as the repertoire, the pupil-teacher cooperation, method of playing and quality of the results.

*The principle of visualizing* is a logically founded requirement in the young pianist's cognizance activity. The visually perceived text (folk quatrains, folk tune arrangements) is transformed into piano sound with the help of the pupil's imagination in presentation of nature and everyday life depictions, and possible to enhance with visualization of the according quatrains (pictures, drawings, characteristic gestures or movements).

*The principle of comprehensibility* defines the appropriateness of the folk tune arrangement for piano beginners; it is apparent in the clear presentation of the idea in the folk quatrain which corresponds to the melodic structure in the music score, making the means of musical expression easily accessible and well usable for beginners. Latvian folk quatrains have poetically programmatic contents which specify imagery, bring forth associations and stimulate the development of acoustic control over the touch of the piano keys.

Dialogue aspect in performing folk tune arrangements is particularly enhanced when young pianists play four hands, which requires unified solutions for technical and musical goals of the music and releases positive emotions. Folk tune arrangements for four hands introduce programmatic dialogue into the piano lesson and dialogical situations as a form and method of piano playing. This kind of practicing a musical instrument is mostly associated with the philosophical understanding of cultural learning, which includes dialogue of understanding between the author and perceiver of the work, members of different cultures, between the past and present (Kūle, 1989).

*Kinaesthetic principle* accentuates the movement as a pianist's tool of musical expression, which by performing folk tune arrangements is enhanced by the possibility of singing along the melody, by seeing, listening to and feeling the touch of the piano keys. As a result of complex cognitive processes, the comprehension of visually-associative contents of the folk quatrains in combination with emotive creativity in playing is incorporated into the memory of the young pianist.

Ethno-didactical conception of piano competition for young pianists is orientated towards cultivating a cultural awareness in cooperation with the pedagogue, in order to transmit onto the coming generations the set of Latvian ethical values represented in the cultural heritage. By promoting qualitative changes in the pupils' personality development, the pedagogue faces the task of helping the young pianist discover himself as a unique artistic individuality and reach personally meaningful goals.

The ethno didactical model of the young pianists' competition has an invariant part in the objectively existing genre character of the folk tune arrangements and the ethno-didactical principles of piano playing. The variant part of the model describes the coherencies of the participant's preparation and participation in collaboration with teacher, the enrichment of the young pianists' stage experience and the evaluative activity of the jurors–experts, along with the participants' self-evaluation. The ethno-didactical model of the competition specifies the educational goal–the young pianists' understanding of their cultural awareness in the framework of personally meaningful activity (see Figure 1).

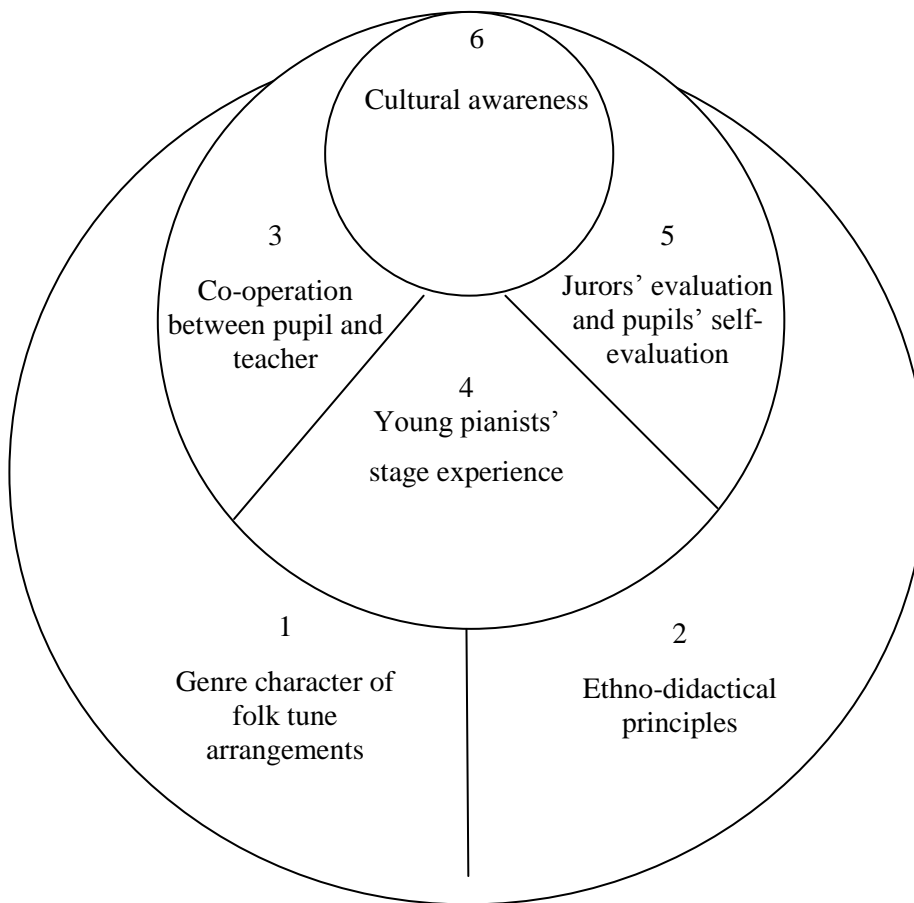


Figure 1. *Ethno-didactical model of competition for young pianists* (Luse, 2012)

Latvian folk song arrangements nowadays rarely find their way into performing pianists' repertoire, undeservingly becoming a status of lesser known or forgotten pieces. The ethno-didactics of the young pianists' competition allows the use of folk tune arrangements to reduce the differences in international piano education programs. The ethno-didactical concept serves as

the base for an educational E-resource with 50 Latvian folk song arrangements, sorted in three proficiency levels—*Beginners*, *Intermediate* and *Advanced* level (Lūse, 2012). The selected arrangements originate from a time span of more than 100 years—from Jāzeps Vītols *18 Latvian Folk Tunes for Piano* (op.29/1901; op.32/1905) up to current arrangements by Ilze Arne and Marija Druste (2011). The poetic refinement of the folk quatrains as the carrier of their ethical values can be more closely inspected with a look at their genre character.

Let us focus on those elements, which are most characteristic for the content of the folk quatrains chosen by the composers. Each quatrain contains one main or several derived entities of emotional content which determine the programmatic character of the piano arrangement and have been interpreted by the authors in their original ways. Sometimes an arrangement includes a story of one musical element, the folk tune being an individualized carrier of the musical image. More often, musical imagery contains several properties, which constitute a dramatically dynamic union of singing and dance elements. Genre elements in the arrangements together with the means of musical expression (texture, register, polyphonic variation) and different structuring of introduction, conclusion and connection sections enhance the effects of the musical message.

Folk tune arrangements belong to the genre of programmatic music, which became especially popular in the creative output of the national schools of the XIX century romantic composers. Several musicologists write about the development of the romantic piano music, accentuating the use of musical miniature and their appropriateness for the depiction of the transient, peculiar, and quick, in music (Hamilton, 2008; Kramer, 2011; Rosen, 2003). Russian musicologist Constantine Zenkin focused on the study of the piano miniature in the context of theoretically aesthetic, in his work describing the particular adequacy of the piano miniature as *a mirror, reflecting the romantic worldview in its poetically most concentrated and concise form* (Zenkin, 1997: 6).

Folk tune arrangements in miniature form are an emotional depiction of a subjective worldview. The biggest group of Latvian folk quatrains arrangements is dedicated to nature imagery (heavenly bodies, trees, waters, birds, animals). Similar techniques are used by several composers to depict the beauty of the **nature landscape**, where a feeling of space is created through the use of echo effect, illustrative elements depicting movement, or juxtaposition of contrasting registers. According to the Russian musicologist Oleg Sokolov, nature landscape is a manifestation of a musical painting or an independent genre sphere. In Latvian folk tune arrangements for piano this sphere is characterized by distinct stylistic means—slow or moderate tempo, regular metre and narrative and contemplative mood (Sokolov, 1977).

Constantine Zenkin points out a special mode of genre affiliation which is best understood as a simultaneous presence, or *synthesis* of several genres (Zenkin, 1997). This is mostly to be found in **musical portraits**, which in piano arrangements often appear in connection with human emotions or comparison to forces of nature, as mentioned in the quatrain texts. A dialogue is often in the forefront of a musical portrait. For solving dialogic situations and characterizing musical personages of the piece, different means of expression are used (contrasts in tempi, register, texture, key, dynamic contrasts).

Arrangements of **lullabies** are very popular, in which the unambiguous influence of their vocal provenance brings modes of singing expression in the forefront, increasing the tender character of the melodic intonations (hushed dynamics, legato melodies, rocking regular rhythm).

Folk song as an expression of ethnic belonging has depicted all stages in a person's life in the diversity of the surrounding nature in the folk quatrains on the themes of rites and important holidays, which mostly show the tendency towards a **dance**. It is apparent in the energetic exactitude of the metre-rhythmic formulae and laconic melodies of pieces which depict themes of weddings or seasonal rites. The favourite position among the arrangements dedicated to the theme of festivities is occupied by the theme of the summer solstice, where the *Jāņi un Līgo night* are enhanced by musical imagery of dancing movement and playfulness (trills, individualized articulation, *staccato* touch).

Summarizing the above mentioned elements of genres, four characteristic types emerge - nature landscape, musical portrait, lullaby, and dance. The 50 arrangements included in the E-resource can be grouped according to the four mentioned types thus:

Nature landscape	Musical portrait	Lullaby	Dance	Composer
Three silver rivers run The Moon counts the stars	I gave my hand			Ilze Arne
Silver rain was falling Cuckoo, little cuckoo	We were all sisters Stomping song		Birzgales dance Alsungas dance Bukaraga dance Big dance Round dance Dance with me, dear sister	Pauls Dambis
	Who are these people singing around			Oļģerts Grāvītis
I walked in the silvery grove				Arta Arnicāne
Birch trees white gown Silver bird Cry, sister, cry	Mother promising not to cry Sister was sitting We are nine boys Two things I missed Do not lead me through the fir wood What is this bird sitting there		How hungry the wedding guests are Dancing with girls Saturday is a visiting day	Romualds Kalsons
		Sleep my sweet		Edgars Raginskis

You sing beautiful, oh nightingale  All Riga was shaking strongly  Dear wind, blow my boat  Little grouse lay on the roadside	I went round the mountain  I put my white shoes  Look, two boyars riding  The mother to her son	Lullaby	Who started the Ligo Feast	Jāzeps Vītols  (op.29)
Oh, ye green pike  Oh, dear Sun, please set soon  I paddled in a silver river	My mother left me young  Why are you crying?  Across the river there call the lambs  I was a little girl when my mother died	Lullaby		Jāzeps Vītols  (op.32)
Folk Impression I: <i>Where are you running, my Rooster</i>  Folk Impression II: <i>Raven in the Oak Tree</i>  Folk Impression IV: <i>You sing beautiful, oh nightingale</i>		Folk Impression III: Lullaby		Marija Druste

Nowadays music education is closely related with informatics and internet is used with the regularity of the traditional copy machine or metronome. Using digital technologies to insert music in an E-resource as data opens another reality in which perception of material experience is replaced by information transmission in digital space (Koper, 2000). Informatics regulates picture, sound and movement as a real space manifestation and offers possibilities of individual teaching via *Skype*, audio or video performance recordings, *DVD* or *YouTube*, or internet master classes.

Music insertion in the E-resource is data which can be perceived in the sound, picture, digital and textual modalities. Nonprofit educational purpose E-resource *In Janis Norvilis Field of Songs* is available in the form of sheet music, recorded tracks and methodic reading material (Lūse, 2012). Let us take a closer look at the E-resource *Ethno-Didactics in Piano Practicing* and its content of 50 folk tune arrangements.

### Beginners' Level

**Ize Arne** (1953) in her *3 Latvian Folk Tune Arrangements (Nr. 1-3)* uses traditional means of sound organization. Each arrangement commences with a brief intro, introducing young pianist in the poetic mood of nature landscape (*The Moon Counts the Stars, Three Silver Rivers Run*) and preparing for a playful characterization of a young girl. Both arrangements present a masterful employ of register juxtaposition which in combination with pedal use

enhance the associative effect of the nature view depicted in the folk quatrains. The portrait of the maiden in its turn uses changing employ of meter characteristic for recitative and energetic five finger runs as an enhancement to the cantabile melody.

**Pauls Dambis** (1936) in *10 Small Pieces for Children (Nr. 4-13)* grounds on the creative folklore transformation, a stylistic wave in the Latvian music of the 1980-ies. Simple miniatures use mostly characteristic folk song rhythmic models, adding a short fragment or just a concise motive of the folk melody. Of pianistic interest are the means the composer has used for creating a contrasting effect of the piano registers: movement coordination, position play, chord techniques and coloristic means. The laconic form of the miniature allows to diversify the elements of the dance genre by choosing individually appropriate tempi for the brisk rhythmic formulae: (*Alsungas Dance: Allegretto, Bukaraga Song: Moderato, Big Dance: Allegro, Round Dance: Allegretto*). The rich and refined rhythmic variability of the composer's folkloric method leaves the pieces open for a contemporary interpretation.

**Oļģerts Grāvītis** (1926) in arrangement for piano solo of the folk tune *Who are these people singing around (Nr. 14)* has pictured a sad mood. The musical parameters of arrangement are characterized by slow tempo, metre  $\frac{3}{4}$ , narrow diapason with falling intonations in a pentachord framework.

### Intermediate Level

**Arta Arnicāne** (1982) has united the objective and the subjective of a nature landscape contemplation experience in her short polyphonic fantasy *I Walked in the Silvery Grove (Nr. 15)*. In the forefront is the folk melody typical expansive flow, reaching its climax in the *tempo primo* section at the end of the piece. Texture-wise, polyphonic figures dominate, especially apparent in the *meno mosso* cadence-like climax which unites the psychological contents into a coherent whole.

**Romualds Kalsons** (1936) has ordered his *12 Latvian Folk Tune Arrangements (Nr. 16-27)* into a cycle according to a programmatic idea—to demonstrate the traditional rites of a wedding in a wide emotional scope, from bride's lyrical contemplation to the merry goings-on of the guests. Similarly to Pauls Dambis, Kalson's innovative searching in the use of the folklore material is characterized by rhythmical sharpness and decisiveness, enriched by the use of polyphonic elements. Psychological moods are captured in a refined sound picture, using a diverse array of pianistic techniques (crossing hands, pedal use, repetitions, *martellato*, *tremolo*, *glissando*, and *rubato* playing). Articulation, timbre and textural techniques are used to individualize the wedding guests' musical depictions. The Latvian musicologist Jānis Torgāns stressed composer's skill to depict accurately, and with the use of musical colors achieve an effect of *timbre personification* (Torgāns, 1987:191).

**Edgars Raginskis** (1984) in the lullaby *Sleep My Sweet (Nr. 28)* has employed a traditional array of pianistic register and timbre techniques in a steady ♩- rhythm in the accompaniment. Interesting coloring searching in combination with pedal use has enhanced the piece with textural details appropriate to the thematic mood.

## Advanced level

**Jāzeps Vītols** (1863-1948) devoted considerable attention to the folk song in many genres during his whole creative life. The arrangements op. 29 and op.32 have retained their expressive attractiveness up to the current days. Both opuses originate in the second period of Jāzeps Vītols creative life, when the individual style of Latvian musical classic was formed. His musical language became more colorful and expressive and his musical themes grew in individuality, refinement and became more programmatic. At the beginning of composing these pieces, Jāzeps Vītols named them *small paraphrases for piano* or *fantasy-like arrangement in free style* (Nr. 29-46).

The piano miniatures are grouped according to the contrast principle. The melody is presented twice, varying the register, texture dynamics or the key the second time. By freely expanding the melody, enhancing it with separate or derived motives, interludes and final sections, Jāzeps Vītols has neared the arrangements towards a rhapsodic-like framework. Emīls Dārziņš described these compositions as *small musical pictures, founded on known folk motives where the composer observes the main character of the folk song and tries to embellish it* (Dārziņš, 1975:178).

Looking into the *10 Latvian Folk Tunes for Piano* op.29 and *8 Latvian Folk Tunes for Piano* op.32, we notice variable use of pianistic means which enhance the picturesque qualities of the music with wide range use of virtuoso passages, trills, arpeggios, double-stops, chords and octaves as well as characteristic for the composer rich texture with harmonic figuration and polyphonic-like writing technique.

**Marija Druste** (1984) composed her four arrangements *Folk Impressions* using self-invented keys (Nr. 47-50). The arrangements *Folk Impression I* with the *Where are you running, my Rooster* melody and *Folk Impression IV* with the *You sing beautiful, oh nightingale* melody use a key of whole and halftones in an alternating sequence:



The arrangement *Folk Impression II* with the *Raven in the Oak Tree* melody employs also a self-invented key of the composer:



Arrangement *Folk Impression III* with the *Lullaby* melody uses a whole tone scale. Each of these arrangements uses only the pitches of the particular scale. The composer suggests that young pianists *could play the scale before practicing the piece, to get the feeling of it. We are accustomed to major and minor keys, which is why we don't usually need to get particularly "tuned" into the music. Because the keys I use are not known, it is a good idea to play those scales at the beginning of practice (or regularly) in the whole range of the piano. Improvising within the key is also a good idea, using the pitches of the key to play short phrases, melodies or chords.*



*Folk Impression I (Nr. 47)* uses a steady ♩-note movement and constant pulsating rhythm, which evokes associations with the running imagery of the piece. Consecutive build-up climaxes in a *forte* culmination at the end of the piece (bars 69-100). The character of the performance will profit from precision in movement coordination and diversity of articulation.

In *Folk Impression II (Nr. 48)*, the dialogic character of the folk quatrains is expressed in two contrasting sections. The first, *alla campana* (bars 1-39) expresses an earnest character, in sharp contrast to the second, carefree refrain section, *leggiero e giocoso* (bars 40-101). The original folk tune in the arrangement is recognizable, and ensured through the use of the author's key. Contrast principle is even enhanced by the imitations of bell sounds in the intro section (bars 1-8), followed by the melody presented three times. Second section is in the *rondo* form.

In *Folk Impression III (Nr. 49)*, genre elements of typical lullaby are present in the use of the gently rocking of half- and quarter-note rhythm in a hushed *mezzo piano-pianissimo* dynamic with the prevalence of higher registers and syncopated pedal use. The peaceful mood of the miniature is enhanced by the transposition of the whole tone scale, which achieves a change of color similar to a modulation. The author recommends playing in an even cantabile style, keeping in mind that the conceived character of the piece is that a *neutral humming*.

*Folk Impression IV (Nr. 50)* is in the form of three part variations A-A1-A2. Similar to the folk quatrains, each following variation widens the intonation scope of the melody in a fantasy-like style. Genre elements of nature landscape–nightingale song in variation 2 (bars 19-29), church bell imitation in the climax of variation 3 (bars 30-41), are further enriched by the use of *rubato*.

In these pieces young pianists can perfect their use of color expression by planning the dynamic layout and feeling of perspective. For example, in melody repeats alternating use of *legato* and *staccato* and *piano* and *forte* contrasts is possible, thus varying imitation techniques. Several solutions are available for the creation of dynamic relief. Outdoors is often visualized as contrasting juxtaposition of fore- and background of the landscape. An appropriate dynamic design is a gradual build-up followed by a climax in the middle and decrease towards the end of the piece.

Repeats of the melodic intonations in the folk tune enhance the aesthetic impact of the folk quatrains. A universal quality of the quatrains, repetition aids to enhance perception and understanding. An already known and recognizable melody is more easily incorporated in one's memory. In the arrangements, different kinds of repeats play the role of organizing the musical form and facilitating the understanding of the emotional message of the piece. Use of repeats allows to see new and original solutions in the performance, develop the pianistic touch techniques, means of expression and memory and foster individual search for solutions in young pianists practicing.

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