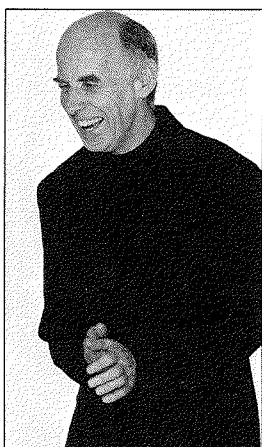


FIRESTARTERS 3

The Mike Nock Piano Collection



Mike Nock (1940)

From his first concert at New Zealand's Ngaruawahia Town Hall in 1951, the career of pianist/composer Mike Nock has spanned an extraordinary breadth of contemporary musical styles. He has since become internationally recognised as a leading jazz pianist/composer through his extensive catalogue of recordings and original compositions. His music encompasses a broad range of instrumentation

and style, including jazz groups of all sizes, string trios/quartets, woodwind/percussion ensembles and large orchestral works.

The music in this collection can be heard on Michael Kieran-Harvey's album *In the Time of Sakura* (Move Records MD3314). Three of these pieces and nine other Mike Nock compositions can also be heard on Michael Houstoun's recent recording *Inland* (Rattle Records 016).

For more information on Mike Nock visit www.mikenock.com.

Ever Distant (2006)

A poignant minor waltz with a lilting melody throughout, the most challenging aspects of this composition are the rhythmic patterns at bars 13 and 29, and the recurring concept of playing four crotchets in the time of three. Try clapping four against three with a metronome before playing the tune. Bring out the left-hand melody from bars 17-25 and always keep a sense of onward flow in mind.

The composer writes:

*The melody should always be in the foreground in **Ever Distant**. Always strive for a legato sound and feel free to use the sustain pedal if you hear it.*

Don Sergio's Dream (2006)

Given the story behind this piece, there is a "man on a mission" energy and vitality about the composition. The employment of the alternating 3-2-1 fingerings on the opening motif is important to maintain the individual integrity of each repeated note. Watch for the accents on the second half of beat two at bar 4, the second half of beat four at bar 7, and the second half of beat two at bar 28. Sense the urgency really gain at bar 33, and also at bar 69, where the tension builds toward the *fff* climax at bar 90. What becomes of the dream?

The composer writes:

***Don Sergio's Dream** was inspired by an improbable but true story about Don Sergio, who built a car from junk found in his small Brazilian village and drove it to the ocean, a journey of around a thousand miles.*

Aim for clarity, particularly in the repeated single notes and chords and don't play it too fast.

Pogo (2005)

As the title suggests, **Pogo** is a playful, exuberant tune with an inherent bounce, which negates the need for staccato articulation. The composition is constructed around a balance of major tonality ascending motifs, and descending diminished lines with an eight-bar interlude from bars 18-25. Note the resonance of the parallel diminished lines a tenth apart, at bars 34-36.

The composer writes:

***Pogo** was composed in 1962. I recently rediscovered it and began playing it again. I have an image of Pogo Bear bouncing along on a pogo stick (remember them?). Try to keep this picture in mind when playing the piece.*

Land of the Never-Never (2005)

This piece conjures up feelings of restlessly and relentlessly searching for something that may never be found. Try delaying the right hand octave melody notes just slightly at bars 122, 127,

130, etc. for dramatic effect. Find the contrast in the relative stillness of the hauntingly beautiful melodies and sustained harmonies from bars 61-90, reminiscent of English folk tunes. Depress the sustain pedal before beginning the piece and pedal lightly throughout, and always allow the melody to sing above the accompaniment.

The composer writes:

*The right-hand figuration first heard in bar one of **Land of the Never-Never** should be played with clarity and a steady rhythm and always softer than the melody.*

Cyboreal (2005)

The opening left-hand motif establishes the 'forward motion' aspect of the piece, while the opening right-hand melody dances above the left-hand ostinato. Be sure to observe the quaver rest on the 'and' of two in the opening four bars. The arpeggiated pattern at bar 43 can be 'freer', but must move toward the left-hand figure at bar 44. Explore the concept of five semiquaver notes in the time of four, prior to playing bars 63-64.

The composer writes:

***Cyboreal** is a fantasy world. The main technical challenges are the right hand figuration, the perfect fifths from bars 27-41 and the occasional stretch in the left hand (it's OK to use the sustain pedal).*

Gestures (2006)

An arpeggiated flight of fancy; from the opening bars, be sure to connect the left-hand phrase with the right. Think of this piece as a series of playful questions, some answered, others just left to the imagination. Play the sections from bars 25-28, and from bars 36 to the end, as a cascade of ascending and descending motifs, played almost as if they are just one thought.

The composer writes:

***Gestures** is much easier to play when divided between the hands and very difficult to play if it isn't, though it remains a challenging piece anyway. Aim for the crossovers between hands to be seamless.*

Ringstone Round (2004)

A circular, gently floating melody, above a predominantly 5/4 harmonic landscape, allow each phrase to 'breathe' bar by bar. Note the slightly slower section at bar 96 and the 'black note' glissando at bar 34.

The composer writes:

***Ringstone Round** in this case is not a musical term, but a mythical place name. It should be played with a free slow steady rhythm throughout, with the melody clearly heard above the accompaniment.*

Cartwheels (2005)

One of the most demanding works in this selection, **Cartwheels** is an etude in time signature flexibility, and in left and particularly right-hand dexterity. Although the metronome mark is ♩ = 126, this can be raised slightly for an even more virtuosic effect. Aim for creating an improvisatory flow in the melodic line at all times.

If some of the left-hand stacked-5th chords (e.g., bars 9-19) are too large for the smaller hands, try arpeggiating them from bottom to top, or just play the two lower notes, a 5th apart.

The composer writes:

***Cartwheels** is an exuberant romp somewhere between a Chopin etude and a McCoy Tyner jazz solo. I often use it as a warm-up. Keep a steady rhythm, don't play too fast and make sure the hands are even, particularly from bars 39-65.*

Sho's Cradle Song (2005)

This gentle lullaby can be thought of in three parts; bars 1-16, the opening melody; bars 17-32, interlude; and bars 33-41, a variation on the opening melodic material.

The opening and closing sections utilise a melody reminiscent of a music box, with a contrasting contrapuntal B section. Employ light touches and let the left-hand melody really shine.

The composer writes:

***Sho's Cradle Song** came to me while trying to entertain a friend's eight month old boy as we were sitting at the piano. Try to emulate the gentle rocking of a baby's cradle.*