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Nocturne in F Minor OP.55, No.1, IA3, Frédéric Chopin

Performance Statement

As a performer, I aim to play a sensitive and imaginative interpretation of *Chopin's* Nocturne in F minor Op.55 No.1. This piece was *Chopin's* 15th nocturne composition and was published in 1844. These short pieces were described as 'songs of the night' and Nocturne in F minor follows the standard structure and characteristics of *Chopin's* nocturnes (Bielecki, 2018). Of the recordings I listened to, Arthur Rubinstein's 1965 recording had the most influence on my performance choices. My manipulation of elements revolves around the goal of effectively 'painting a picture' for the audience with the piece. Rubinstein does this very well in his recording.

The execution of expressive devices was crucial to satisfying this goal. In the main theme of the nocturne, I imagined the accompaniment as the stillness of night, while the melody is the sharp and bright moonlight. Therefore, I will focus on playing the left hand with a sensitive and mellow touch. On the contrast, the melody in the right hand must be distinct and sensitive. The B section changes from a peaceful scene to something more dramatic. Some interpret this as a storm which has brewed during the night. In this section I will focus on dynamic contrast so that the change in scene is conveyed.

To paint a picture for the audience, effective use of rubato is equally as important as expressive devices. Expressive devices are important for sensitivity and emotion while rubato is responsible for tension in the piece. For example, I plan to use more rubato in the B section to convincingly describe the arrival of the 'storm'. This intensity is resolved at the end of the B section and the transition back to the A section. During this period rubato will be used to represent the calming and resolution of the B section.

I have developed these ideas independently, by listening to recordings and with the assistance from my piano teacher. My teacher has helped me refine these musical ideas. This performance builds from my previous experience playing pieces from the romantic era, however, challenges my ability to play sensitively and convincingly.

References

Bielecki, A., 2018. *The Fryderyk Chopin Institute*. [Online] Available at: <https://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/genre/detail/id/11>

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Reflective Statement

There are cognitive and physical challenges which I had to face to deliberately perform a romantic piano work to a high standard. I have used appropriate rehearsal techniques to reanimate “Nocturne in F minor Op.55 No.1” by *Chopin*. These techniques include effective memorisation, listening to notable recordings and evaluation of self-recordings.

Before applying serious strategies to work on expressiveness, I focused on becoming comfortable with the piece. This involved learning the piece and more importantly, memorising the piece. In my practice, I separated learning from memorising. When memorising, I used techniques which I learned from my piano teacher. For example, I took a small passage (2-4 bars) and read through it once, then played it slowly from memory without looking back at the music. If I succeeded, then I move onto another passage, with the intent of returning to the successful passage later. If not, then I repeated the process and played the passage slower to ensure I was playing each note confidently. This strategy ensured that I was confident in all sections of the piece. This prepared me to build musicality in the piece.

Initially, I listened to many recordings of the piece to understand the general idea of the piece. Given that I have performed other pieces from the romantic genre, I already had a good idea of what the piece should convey. However, one recording which I found particularly useful was Arthur Rubenstein’s 1965 recording (Youtube, 2015). His interpretation laid out a blueprint which I used when deciding on specific performance choices. One technique I used was to evaluate my own recording of different passages, attempting a different idea each time. Then I would choose the best one. Initially, this strategy has some errors. For example, I was not able to remember every single musical decision for each section when I began practicing musicality. I was conscious of the time I was wasting ‘rediscovering’ ideas. To avoid this, I started to write down the ideas I had onto my music. This made my practicing more efficient and effective since I was able to practice any section just by reading my description. These three techniques, as well as consistent and focused practice, allowed me to prepare a confident and deliberate performance of Nocturne in F minor Op.55 No.1 by *Chopin*.

References

Rubinstein, Arthur, 2015. “*Nocturnes, Op. 55: No. 1 in F Minor*” - *Frédéric Chopin*; Rubinstein Collection, Vol. 49: *Chopin: Nocturnes* (recorded 1965); Sony Music Entertainment. [Online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DcwAQ08-So0>

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