

FIVE EKMOUSIKÉS FOR SOLO PIANO

A THESIS IN
Music Composition

Presented to the faculty of the University
Of Missouri - Kansas City in partial fulfillment of
The requirements for the degree:

MASTER OF MUSIC

by
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B.M., Southeast Missouri State University
Cape Girardeau, Missouri, 2014

Kansas City, Missouri
2016

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FIVE EKMOUSIKÉS FOR SOLO PIANO

Trevor Taylor Smith, Candidate for the Master of Music Degree

University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2016

ABSTRACT

“Five Ekmousikés” is a multi-movement work composed for solo piano, dedicated to and to be premiered by my grandmother, Dr. Janet Bass Smith. Each movement in this work is programmatically tied to a piece of extra-musical art by Dr. Smith, consisting of three oil paintings and two poems. Chronologically, the movements are ordered “Sunset on Barren River Lake”, “Alone in Mammoth Cave”, “The Color of Death”, “Winter Peace”, and “Trifid Nebula”.

As a child, I was often struck by paintings of my grandmother. I remember examining them with a sense of wonder - their use of color, substance, and texture leaving a deep impression on me at a young age. In “Five Ekmousikés”, I strove to celebrate the artistic achievements of my grandmother (musical and otherwise), acknowledge her influence on my own aesthetic, and attempt to capture the qualities of her art in musical form.

The word “ekmousikés” is my own adaptation from the term “ekphrasis”, a literary technique used to create a verbal or rhetorical description of another work of art, typically from the visual medium. Each movement is intended as a musical analogue its corresponding work, as opposed to simply existing as music that was inspired by those works.

This may be most obvious in the movement “Winter Peace”. The painting depicts an inhabited cabin, situated in a valley within a range of mountains. The cabin appears to be a small and meek human element in comparison to its rather looming surroundings, and a snowstorm

blurs the landscape. I depicted this musically by writing a simple melody, representing the human element, and placing that melody “inside” of a louder and more harmonically volatile texture, symbolizing the overbearing landscape. The sustain pedal remains down the entire movement to blur the resulting sonorities in the same way the snowstorm blurred the mountainside in her painting. My thought processes in composing the other four movements of “Five Ekmousikés” were similar in manner.

The texts for “Alone in Mammoth Cave” and “The Color of Death” are included prior to each movement in the score.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the Conservatory of Music and Dance have examined a thesis titled “Five Ekmousikés”, presented by Trevor Taylor Smith, candidate for the Master of Music Degree, and certify in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Chen Yi, DMA, Committee Chair
Conservatory of Music and Dance

Paul Rudy, DMA
Conservatory of Music and Dance


Reynold Simpson, DMA
Conservatory of Music and Dance

FIVE EKMOUSIKÉS

General Performance Notes:

- In the event that a technique requiring the performer to play inside the piano is not possible on the performer's instrument, contacting the composer for an alternative means of achieving the intended effect is preferable. If this isn't possible, however, in most cases sounding the note in a different octave to achieve the written timbre is preferable to altering the color of the notated pitch.
- The only way in which the performer will need to prepare the piano is to mark the strings such that they are able to be found quickly and to have a means of holding the sustain pedal down while plucking or muting the strings. "Five Ekmousikés" does not require foreign objects to be inserted into the piano in the nature of a true "prepared" piano.
- When the sustain pedal is marked to be down throughout a section, it is implied that every note is to be left ringing. In "Winter Peace" and "Alone in Mammoth Cave", this is done during the entire movement.
- In sections without notated meter, dashed bar lines are used to indicate the beginnings and endings of phrases. Solid bar lines are used to distinguish sections.
- In the movement "The Color of Death", speech is notated under specific sets of rhythms. These words are not meant to be spoken or sung while playing; those rhythms come from transcriptions of the phrases written beneath them, and the notated phrases are pulled directly from the text that the music is inspired by.
- Movements may be extracted and played as individual pieces.

Notes on extended techniques:

- A "+" sign indicates the performer should place the tip of one finger on the relevant string, close to the bridge such that, when struck, the string will make a percussive "domp" sound, while still possessing a resonant, pitched quality.
-  The empty notehead notation that implies you finish the gesture ad lib., specifically in regard to the quantity of notes.
- The marking "pizz. f.t." indicates the performer should pluck the relevant strings with their fingertips (specifically not the fingernail). This is to be contrasted with the technique used in the movement "Alone in Mammoth Cave", where the performer is instructed to sound the strings by tapping with the fingernail, which achieves a different timbre.



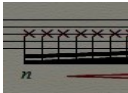
- The notes inside the box are to be played in the order given continuously until otherwise instructed.



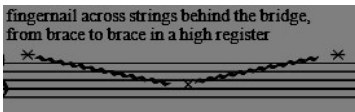
- This notation instructs the performer to hit a cluster of notes with their palm, nearly always in the lowest fifth of the piano. The exact notes (chromatic or white-key) and exact range are not particularly important.



- This notation instructs the performer to scrape with their fingernail across the strings inside the piano, beginning roughly in the range of the cluster on the staff and in the direction indicated by the subsequent line.



- An "x" shaped notehead indicates that a percussive instead of pitched sound is intended to be produced. More precise means of producing the sound will be provided in each instance in the score.



- This sound can be achieved by scraping the fingernail along the strings above the bridge in the high register, on the end of the piano farther away from the performer. In terms of how the wire is strung, this is analogous to plucking the strings below the bridge on a cello or close to the tuning pegs on a guitar. The sounds produced should be high and irregular in pitch, like wind chimes, and have a little bit of sustain to them.

Notes on preparation of the piano:

- It is my experience that it is most efficient to simply mark the strings that correspond to the black keys on the piano, from Bb0 to G#6, and to do that such that every string may be found and plucked or muted relatively quickly. If that method is not sufficient, here is the total list of pitches that require touching the string in some form: A0, B0, C1, D1, Eb1, F#1, Ab1, Bb1, B1, C2, C#2, Eb2, F2, Ab2, Bb2, C3, D3, Eb3, F3, F#3, G3, Ab3, A3, Bb3, B3, C4, D4, Eb4, E4, F4, G4, Ab4, A4, B4, C5, C#5, E5, G#5, and G#6.
- Nearly all of the extended techniques inside the piano require the sustain pedal be down at the same time. Every performer's situation is different, however it is my experience that adding a handle to a tuning wedge and inserting it above the sustain pedal is the least stressful way of accomplishing this. This allows the performer to move more freely while reaching the necessary locations inside the piano and can be taken out quickly.

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Five Ekmousikés

I. Sunset on Barren River Lake

Trevor Smith

Freely, Suspended c. ♩ = 58

pizz. f.t.

Piano

p

pp
on keys, sempre una corda

Red.

on keys

mf

p

8vb

mp

pizz. f.t.

mf

on keys

p

13

on keys

piu mosso

mp

p

16 tre corda

mf *f* *f* *mp* *f*

* Ped.

20 *piu mosso*

repeatedly tap w/ f.t.

mp

24

mf ppp *mp*

tentatively at first, accel.

28 $\text{♩} = 132$

niente

34

mp

40

mp *p* *p*

46

p

52

mf *mp*

59

mp

65

mp

71

f

77

f

83

mf

89

94

99

104

108

113

118

122

ff

127

legato

132

ff

p

subito p

137

f

143

148 *8va* *fff* *ff* *fff* *8vb* *f* *fff* *8vb* *f*

** Ped.*

152 *f* *fff* *f* *fff* *8vb* *f*

156 *fff* *ff* *fff* *fff* *ff* *fff* ** Ped.*

160 *f* *f* *f* ** Ped.* *f*

164 *fff* *fff* *ppp* *8va*

Freely, Suspended c. ♩ = 58

169

pizz. f.t.

173

on keys

177

as if far away

181

*pizz. f.t.**rit.*

185

Text:

“Alone in Mammoth Cave”

The dim trail disappears into a void,
Looking back it emerges out of the inky dark.
Creatures of her light dance on the walls and ceiling,
Moving as she moves.
Stone sentinels guard silence.
Who were those people who came before?
Did they have names?
“She who walks far”
“He who chips stones”
“She who finds water”
Did they call to each other
As they chipped away crystals of stone?
Her light flickers – almost dies.
There! In the shadows – a movement!
Listen! Can’t you hear them?
Her light brightens again, pushing back against the dark.

II. Alone in Mammoth Cave

Freely, Suspended

piano slap on brace (lower pitch)

drum fingers on brace

pizz. pluck w/ thumbnail

n *mf* *mp*

f

sempre pedal

2

alternate finger and palm hits

n *mf* *p*

3

roll fingers on brace, ad lib.

n *mp* *n*

pizz. pluck w/ thumbnail

p *mf* *p*

5

as before

n *mp* *n*

p *mp* *pp*

as before

3 3

The musical score is written for piano and consists of four systems. The first system is marked 'Freely, Suspended'. The piano part features a series of notes in the bass clef, with a dynamic marking of *f* and a 'sempre pedal' instruction. The right hand part features a series of notes in the treble clef, with a dynamic marking of *n* and a 'pizz. pluck w/ thumbnail' instruction. The second system continues the piano part with a dynamic marking of *p* and the right hand part with a dynamic marking of *p*. The third system features a 'roll fingers on brace, ad lib.' instruction in a box, with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a 'pizz. pluck w/ thumbnail' instruction. The fourth system features an 'as before' instruction in a box, with a dynamic marking of *pp* and a 'pizz. pluck w/ thumbnail' instruction. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'drum fingers on brace', 'piano slap on brace (lower pitch)', and 'alternate finger and palm hits'.

7

on keys

mp *p* *pp*

3 3

fingernail across strings behind the bridge, from brace to brace in a high register

9

p *pp* *mp* *mf*

3 3 5 3

n

11

drum fingers on brace

on keys

n *f*

3 3

palm slap on brace (lower pitch)

12

f

pizz. pluck w/ thumbnail

n *mp* *pp*

3 3

13

roll fingers on brace, ad lib.

pizz. pluck w/ thumbnail

$n < mp > n$

$pp < mp > pp$

8vb mp

15

$n < p > n$

$p < mp > pp$

3 3

8vb

17

on keys

$mp < pp$

3

fingernail across strings behind the bridge, from brace to brace in a high register

mp

3

19

mf

3 5 3

rub any surface of piano with palms to create airy sound

n

$pp < n$

Text:

“The Color of Death”

Snow-covered granite peaks
beautiful clear blue lake red cup
dipping into dark container again
and again young man now part of
the water gray ashes swirling and
tumbling over pink, gray, green
granite disappearing under the
dark road into oblivion—
mischievous red-head moving
toward the sea no peace in life—
peace in death?

III. The Color of Death

Grave, with much rubato
c. ♩ = 42

Piano

Measures 1-4: 4/4 time, *p* (piano), *ppp* (pianissimo) in the bass.

Measures 5-8: 6/4 time, *pp* (pianissimo), *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano).

Measures 9-11: 3/4 time, *mf* (mezzo-forte).

Measures 12-14: 4/4 time, *f* (forte), *mp* (mezzo-piano), *f* (forte), *8vb* (8va), *Ped.* (pedal).

15

p *mp*

mov - ing to - ward the sea

p *Led.*

19

p

a gain and a - gain in-to ob-liv-i-on

Led.

22

p *pp* *p*

Led.

25

mp *pp* *mf* *pp*

Led. *mf*

16

40

8vb
ff

ff

fff

42

fff

fff

9

9

9

9

43

f

f

9

9

9

9

* Leo.

44

9 9 10 10 10

45

mp *niete* 10 10 10 10

mp

46

10 10 10 10 10

p *pp*

47

RH simile

LH 12 12 12 12

mp

48

49

50

51

52

12

12

2/4

2/4

53

12

12

2/4

2/4

54

ff

12

12

12

12

8vb

8vb

8vb

8vb

4/4

4/4

ff

* *And.*

55

12

12

12

12

8vb

8vb

8vb

8vb

4/4

4/4

8vb

8vb

8vb

56

f

f

Red.

12

12

12

12

(8vb)

8vb

8vb

57

12

12

12

12

(8vb)

8vb

8vb

58

mf

mf

Red.

12

12

12

12

(8vb)

8vb

8vb

This image shows measures 59 through 62 of the musical score for 'The Great Wall of China' by John Williams. The score is written for piano and features a complex, rhythmic melody in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The time signature is 5/4, which is indicated at the end of measure 62. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and '8vb' (octave below). The melody in the right hand is characterized by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often grouped in pairs. The bass line features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing triplets. The overall texture is dense and rhythmic, typical of Williams' style in this piece.

63

Handwritten musical score for 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written for three parts: Treble, Bass, and Bass. The time signature is 5/4. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like '12' and '8vb'. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

65

8vb

Red.

12

12

12

12

3

8vb

66

mf

12

12

12

12

3

8vb

Red.

mf

67

mf

12

12

12

6

3

8vb

Red.

68

12

12

3

8vb

Red.

24

69

Led.

8vb

12

70

(8vb)

mp

8vb

12

71

f

12

8vb

ff

ff

* *Led.*

* *Led.*

73 *fff*

74 *ff*

75 *rit.* *mp*

Grave *8va*

77 *ppp*

pp grey ash-es young man now part of the wa-ter no peace in

ppp

Reo.

(8va)-----

81

life, peace in death?

pp

(8va)-----

83

pp

(8va)-----

85

pp

(8va)-----

87

ppp

(8va)-----

90

ppp

IV. Winter Peace

Very Freely, with a depth of texture

Piano

mf
sempre pedal

as rhythm increases, move the muting finger up the string (away from the bridge) while pressing down on the string to raise the pitch, reverse as rhythm decreases, *sempre*

2

cantabile

p

3

mp

4

p

5

6

8 *pizz. w/ f.t.*

9

10

mp *pp* *f* *mf*

mp *pp*

pp *f*

mf

f *mf* *f*

on keys

nail scrape across strings, upward

nail scrape across strings, upward

11

mf *mp*

8

mf *p*

12

mp *pp* *pp* *pizz. w/f.t.*

8

pp

15

una corda, morendo *pizz. w/f.t.*

p *pp*

on keys

8

ppp

16

pizz. w/f.t.

ppp *pp*

8

ppp

18

pizz. w/f.t.

ppp *n* *pppp*

8

pppp

V. Trifid Nebula

Atmospheric, motion without steady pulse

Piano

ff **ff**

cont. tremolo

ff **8vb -** sempre ped.

2

play notes as fast as possible, like a tremolo

3

4

mf blend four note tremolo into this run, play as fast as possible

simile

5

6

7

8

9

gradually mute such that last eighth is more percussive than pitched

8vb
ff

10 8

11 8

12 8

13 8

accel. 10 10 10 10 10 *ff*

14

as before

Freely, Mysterious

c. ♩ = 60

pp

cantabile

f subito *p*

18

6/4 5/4 4/4

3

21

start very slowly,
molto accel.

pp

23

$\text{♩} = 56$

ff

9

9

ff

25

Andantino

p

mp

niete

27

9 9 9 9

8

29 8 *f*

34 8

39 8

44 8 *mf* *p* *ff*

48 *mf*

keep playing ostinato, let drift out of tempo, played as fast as possible

RH

This image shows a page of a musical score for 'The Swan' by Camille Saint-Saëns, specifically measures 60 through 68. The score is written for piano and features a variety of musical notations including treble and bass staves, dynamic markings, and articulation symbols.

Measures 60-61: Measure 60 begins with a treble staff containing a half note G^{8va} (marked *8va*) and a quarter note F^{8va}. The bass staff has a wavy line. Measure 61 continues the bass line with a series of eighth notes, marked with a '9' above the staff.

Measures 62-63: Measure 62 starts with a treble staff half note G^{8va} (marked *8va*) and a quarter note F^{8va}. The bass staff continues the eighth-note pattern. Measure 63 features a treble staff with a whole note G^{8va} and a whole note F^{8va}, both marked with a '9' above the staff. The bass staff continues the eighth-note pattern.

Measures 64-65: Measure 64 has a treble staff with a whole note G^{8va} and a whole note F^{8va}, both marked with a '9' above the staff. The bass staff continues the eighth-note pattern. Measure 65 features a treble staff with a whole note G^{8va} and a whole note F^{8va}, both marked with a '9' above the staff. The bass staff continues the eighth-note pattern.

Measures 66-67: Measure 66 has a treble staff with a whole note G^{8va} and a whole note F^{8va}, both marked with a '9' above the staff. The bass staff continues the eighth-note pattern. Measure 67 features a treble staff with a whole note G^{8va} and a whole note F^{8va}, both marked with a '9' above the staff. The bass staff continues the eighth-note pattern.

Measure 68: Measure 68 features a treble staff with a whole note G^{8va} and a whole note F^{8va}, both marked with a '9' above the staff. The bass staff continues the eighth-note pattern.

Dynamic Markings: The score includes several dynamic markings: *f* (forte) at measure 63, *ff* (fortissimo) at measure 66, and *fff* (fortississimo) at measure 68.

Articulation and Phrasing: The score includes various articulation symbols such as slurs, accents, and phrasing slurs. There are also some specific markings like *8va* and *9* above the staff.

70

71

73

76

82

88

(8vb) * Ped.

93

(8vb) * Ped.

98

(8vb)

102

(8vb) mp rit. mp

105

(8vb) pp

let clust ring approx. 7 sec.

Freely, Suspended

mute more as rhythm decreases

p

mf (pedal cont.)

109 *ppp* *p* *mf* *8va*

112 *p* *ppp* *8vb* *mf* *8va*

115 *p* *mp* *pizz. f.t.* *p* *mf* *8vb*

119 *on keys* *mf* *f* *on keys* *mf* *f* *ff* *ff* *ff* *8vb*

123 $\text{♩} = 72$ tremolo as fast as possible,
like an alarm(one hand)

fff

ff

(8vb)

127

(stay fff in R.H.) rit.

fff

ff

mp

pp

134

rit.

p

start very slowly,
molto accel.

137

ppp

9

9

9

9

♩ = 56

139

9 9 9 9

roll if necessary
>

8vb—
ff

141

9 9

(8vb)—

* Led. * Led.

145

6/4 4/4

3

(8vb)—

* Led. * Led. * Led. * Led.

149

5 10 10 10

8vb—

* Led. * Led.

155

Handwritten musical score for 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written on three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a 5/4 time signature. The middle staff is a bass clef with a 5/4 time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 5/4 time signature. The music is written in G major (one sharp). The first two staves have a wavy line above them. The bottom staff has a wavy line below it. The music consists of a single melodic line with a 6-measure rest in the first measure, followed by a 6-measure rest in the second measure, and then a 6-measure rest in the third measure. The melody is written in a 5/4 time signature. The score ends with a double bar line.

156

9

9

3

6

3

* Led.

8vb

158

9

5

5

5

5

6

* Led.

8vb

160

ff

f

5

5

5

5

6

8vb

Led.

8vb

Detailed description of the musical score: The score consists of three systems of piano music. The first system (measures 156-157) is in 4/4 time. The right hand has a 9-measure phrase, with the last 9 measures boxed. The left hand has a 3-measure phrase, with the last 6 measures being a triplet. The second system (measures 158-159) is also in 4/4 time. The right hand has a 9-measure phrase, with the last 5 measures being a triplet. The left hand has a 6-measure phrase, with the last 5 measures being a triplet. The third system (measures 160-161) is in 4/4 time. The right hand has a 5-measure phrase, with the last 5 measures being a triplet. The left hand has a 6-measure phrase, with the last 5 measures being a triplet. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

162

ff

8^{va}

6

6

6

6

8^{vb}

6

6

6

$$* \mathcal{L}ed. \quad \begin{array}{c} \blacksquare \\ > \\ 8^{vb} \\ ff \end{array}$$

169

fff

ff

fff

* Ped.

* Ped.

172

ff

fff

3

3

3

3

* Ped.

174

ff *fff* *ff*

8vb *fff*

177

fff

180

ff

Atmospheric, motion without steady pulse

181

8va

8vb

fff *mf* *mf*

(pedal cont.)

182 8

183 8

184 8

as before 185 8 simile

186 8

187

188

189

rit.

ff

190

gradually mute such that last eighth is more percussive than pitched

f

fff

8vb

f

simile

192

193 *rit.*

mf

Flowing, with much rubato

c. ♩ = 76

194

mp *poco a poco morendo*

(pedal cont.)

196

p

8va-1

198

8va-1

200

pp

pizz. f.t.
8va-
#6

202

ppp

VITA

As a performer, Trevor Smith has achieved many honors in both classical and jazz music competitions, winning outstanding soloist awards on saxophone at the MAC Jazz Festival, Truman Jazz Festival, Chicago's Heritage Music Festival, and at the Elmhurst Jazz Festival, where he also presented original music in both jazz combo and big band form. Smith has also won several honors at the state level in Missouri, performing with the All-State Band in 2009 and 2010 on alto saxophone and with Missouri's All-Collegiate Orchestra in 2013 on oboe.

Smith's work as a composer is also not limited to any single genre, drawing from a wide range of both popular and avant-garde musical traditions and often informed by his varied work as a performer. He has written and recorded music for jazz and R&B drummer Bo Lamar's collective "Sanctuary", performs original compositions with the aid of live electronics, and composes acoustic works for chamber ensembles, particularly those which feature winds. Smith self-published his album "Isolation Chamber" in December of 2015.

Smith's primary composition instructors have been Dr. James Mobberley, Dr. Paul Rudy, Dr. Zhou Long, and Dr. Chen Yi at the UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance, as well as Dr. Robert Fruehwald and Dr. Robert Conger from Southeast Missouri State University, from which he graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Music in Composition in 2014.