



SHESOUNDS:

Leveling Piano Music by Black, Indigenous, and Women of Colour

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I acknowledge that I live and work on the traditional territory of the Algonquin and Anishinaabe people and I dwell here with humility and respect towards the traditional guardians of this land.

“Cannons secure institutions and institutions secure canons” – bell hooks. When conservatory repertoire lists dictate what we teach in piano lessons, we ensure a gender and racially biased narrative that continues to exclude the voices of Women of Colour. In this paper, I level repertoire according to Canadian conservatory leveling parameters. The pieces included in this essay are composed by historical and present-day Women of Colour. Through the leveling and discussion of each of these works, I hope piano teachers feel empowered and equipped to teach this repertoire and to explore other works by these composers. Each of these works is easily accessible and is available for purchase online, through accessible digital archives such as IMSLP, or available through the composer’s website. The compositions are diverse in style and genre, with excellent potential to appeal to students who enjoy pop, classical, or contemporary music. Music resources shape what musicians teach and what students learn, perform and listen to. In this essay, I advocate for inclusion and representation of the under-acknowledged contributions of BIPOC women composers.

At the University of Ottawa, researchers Adams and Loepp-Thiessen, surveyed Canadian private music teachers. The statistics show that 57% of surveyed music teachers believe that racism is a problem within music education. In the same study, 43.6% of surveyed private music teachers the Black Lives Matter movement in the spring of 2020 impacted their teaching practices. This same study revealed that only 16% of Canadian private music teachers prioritize teaching music by BIPOC composers, but 70.2% feel that they do not have access to resources that help them address the equity gap in music education. Dr. Leah Claiborne in 2018 revealed that the RCM 2015 piano syllabus includes no Black composers in levels 1-8 and only 4 in levels 9-Diploma. None of these compositions are by Black women. Scott Caizley’s ABRSM research reveals that Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic composers make up less than 1% of repertoire across all disciplines. In the current Conservatory Canada syllabus, women make up 16% of 20th and 21st century repertoire lists women of colour make up .9%. In the 2015 RCM piano syllabus, women make up 18% of the 20th- and 21st-Century repertoire lists and Women of Colour represent 1.1% of that number. The 1980s brought a significant rise in the inclusion of music by women in Canadian conservatory repertoire which coincides with the formation of the Association of Canadian Women Composers and the rise of feminist-scholarship in musicology, yet only two BIPOC female composers are included within piano repertoire in Canadian conservatories to date.

The methodology for this essay models researchers Claiborne and Tithecott who introduce newly-leveled works in a format that first discusses the pedagogical lessons that define each

conservatory level, introduces a piece, and discusses its pedagogical lessons while comparing it to pieces in the conservatory level. Though each composition is qualified in its own right without my additional commentary, I compare them to pieces which already reside within the curricula for analysis reasons. I discuss works from levels Preparatory to Associate Diploma level discussing the pedagogical value of each work. Classical music culture conditions musicians to know which composers to like and dislike through their inclusion or exclusion practices. Dr. Samantha Ege says that she was “inoculated to see classical music as the exclusive domain of white men” (Ege 2019). The music and names that we hear from early on in our musical training define what we want to play. By leveling piano pieces by BIPOC women which are not present within piano syllabi, I hope that the studio teacher is introduced to new composers and repertoire and feels better equipped to add new compositions to their teaching curriculum.

Preparatory

The Preparatory level is the first official level within the curricula. Students learn Preparatory music from method books and pre-Level 1 repertoire. The repertoire remains within the five-finger hand position due to the size of the average student’s hands. Students learn read music in simple time with rhythmic values of quarter, half, dotted-half and whole notes, and complementary rests. Students read in the treble and bass clefs in intervals of 2nds, 3rds, and 5ths on the staff. The titles of repertoire pieces often appeal to the imagination of a young beginner.

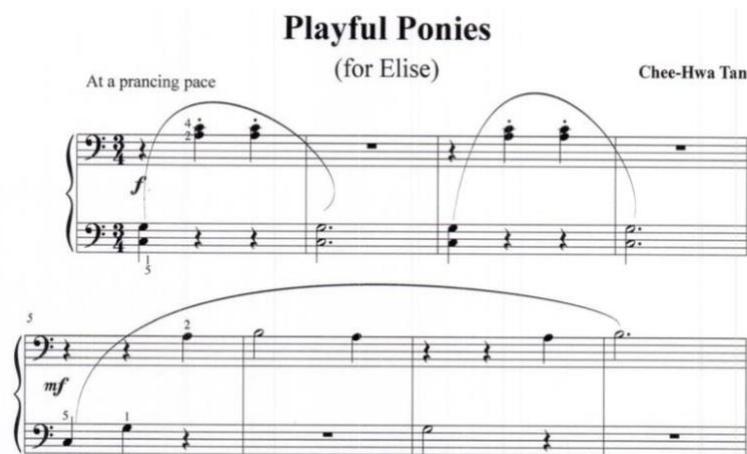


Figure 1 “Playful Ponies” by Chee Hwa Tan from Piano Corner, chee-hwa.com (mm. 1-8).

The piece I leveled for preparatory is “Playful Ponies” by American composer Chee-Hwa Tan. Tan composed this piece for a student who “loved horses and was working on strengthening their hand position while still making beautiful phrases” (Tan 2020). The piece remains in 3/4 time, remains in a 5-finger hand position, and uses legato and staccato articulation. The piece follows a

triadic pattern (ex. m. 1-4) and uses stepwise motion in the bass (ex. m. 4-5) which works on voicing a legato melody between the right and left hands. The piece is written entirely in the bass clef and aids students who may find bass clef note-reading a challenge. The piece uses quarter, half, and dotted half notes with complementary rests. This piece compares to Boris Berlin's piece "A Skating Waltz" found in the RCM *Celebration Series Piano Repertoire Prep A Book*.



Figure 2 "A Skating Waltz" by Boris Berlin in *Celebration Series Prep A* (mm. 1-4)

"A Skating Waltz" is a waltz in 3/4 time. Berlin's piece stays within a five-finger hand position, except for a brief moment in m. 14, and uses legato and staccato articulation. It follows simple triadic patterns (ex. m. 1-2 and 5-6), and stepwise motion in the bass clef (ex. m. 4, 8). Berlin's piece helps students who are learning to voice a melody in their left hand and need practice in reading in the bass clef. Similar to Tan, this piece uses only quarter, half, and dotted half notes with complementary rests. Both pieces use imaginative titles and use descriptors with the tempo marking. Both pieces match in level and technical difficulty, and "Playful Ponies" is an excellent piece for the Preparatory pianist.

Level 1

In Level 1 music, students learn elements of the Baroque and Classical style in List A. The characterpieces in List B encourage imagination and creativity through musical expression. In List C repertoire, students explore hand independence through Inventions (RCM 2015). Students learn to demonstrate contrasting articulations between the hands. They must play a melody within both hands with staggering starting points. Students are reading hands-together on the staff and are learning to balance melody and accompaniment (Tithecott 2015). At this point, students are reading 8th and dotted quarter notes in addition to whole, half, dotted half, and quarter notes. Students can fluently play solid and broken triads in both hands, play in contrary motion, and handle two-note slurs, shifting hand positions, and basic pedaling (Tithecott 2015).



Figure 3, “Mirror, Mirror, Who is that in the Mirror?” by Hope Lee in *Flake Upon Flake Upon...* (mm. 1-8)

The piece “Mirror, Mirror, Who is that in the Mirror?” by Hope Lee is in her educational book *Flake Upon Flake Upon...* and introduces young students to contemporary music in an imaginative manner. This piece combines elements of all three RCM repertoire lists for Level 1. This piece uses G and C five-finger patterns. It presents differing articulations in the right and left hands required for performing Baroque and Classical dance pieces within RCM Level 1. In this piece, students must master 2-note slurs and display a balance of voices between the right and left hands. This piece presents the challenges of shifting time signatures while remaining within simple time. In the section at m. 8 titled “Playful” students play without measure. This is similar to the reading required in Chatman’s “Spring Light” from Level 1 List B where a student is asked to play “senza misura” and trusting their intuition for tempo and pacing as a guide.

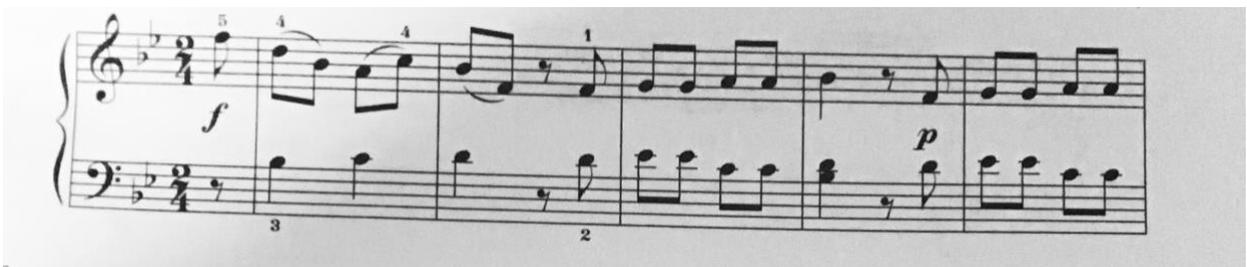


Figure 4, “Allegro in B flat Major” by Wolfgang Amadeaus Mozart in *Celebration Series Piano Repertoire Level 1* (mm. 1-5)

The independent articulation between the hands in Lee’s piece is not unlike “Allegro in B-flat Major” by Mozart which requires students to play with different articulation between the hands while maintaining melody and accompaniment roles between the right and left hands. In addition, “Allegro” frequently uses two-note slurs. Both pieces require the student

to show two-note slurs in one hand while performing a different articulation in the alternate hand.



Figure 5, “Canon” by Carleton Elliot in *Celebration Series Piano Repertoire Level 1* (mm.5-11)

Another comparison for Lee’s piece is “Canon” by Carleton Elliot. In this section, students are asked to echo melodic ideas in a canonic form. The articulation is legato, and the hands are moving in contrary motion. This is comparable to the section titled “Playful” in Lee’s piece in which the hands make use of legato phrasing, move in contrary motion, and create a canon between the right and left hands. Hope Lee’s piece “Mirror, Mirror,…” fits the requirements of Level 1 repertoire through by strengthening hand independence, and contemporary techniques.

Level 2

The Level 2 student strengthens their skills from Level 1. The repertoire lists remain the same with Baroque and Classical in List A, character pieces in List B, and Inventions in List C. The additional skills required in List B pieces are the exploration and refinement of the damper pedal. Students learn to increase “expression and balance of tone” within list B pieces (RCM 2015). Expressive titles are still present but are less direct. The Level 2 student explores pieces in major and their relative minor keys. Students explore expanded tonalities such as modes, penta-scales, and introductory jazz idioms. They become proficient in reading dotted rhythms, compound rhythms, and increased harmonic rhythms (Tithecott 2015). In Level 2, students expand outside of 5-finger hand positions and are accustomed to frequent hand position changes, hand independence, and balance between the hands (Tithecott 2015). Students must show control and refinement in dynamic contrasts.



Figure 6, “Sea Turtle/Umigame/ウミガメ” by Karen Tanaka in *Children of Light* (mm. 5-12).

The piece “Sea Turtle/ウミガメ” by Karen Tanaka is a character piece, comparable to List B. This piece uses an imaginative title, is in 2/2 time, and requires great patience to perform. Students might imagine each phrase aligning with the smooth and controlled motion of a swimming sea turtle. In this piece, students need a refined control of the damper pedal to aid in the expressive phrasing. Students must present balance between the melody and accompaniment between the hands and play outside of the five-finger hand positions, shifting positions on the staff. A rhythmic challenge in this piece is the shifting between triple and duple figures in the right hand. Throughout this piece, students read multiple accidentals, execute single-handed rolled chords, and display a wide range of contrasting dynamics, and read long melodic phrases.



Figure 7, “The Highlands” by Christopher Norton in *Celebration Series Piano Etudes Level 2* (mm. 1-3).

The rhythmic challenges found within this piece compare to “The Highlands” by Christopher Norton. Though “The Highlands” is in a different time signature, the pianist alternates from triple groupings in m. 1 to duple groupings in m. 2. Similarly, the pianist alternates from triple groupings to duple with the left hand keeping simple accompaniment.



Figure 8, “Sailing by Moonlight” by Joan Last in *Celebration Series Repertoire Level 2* (mm.1-8)

Another comparison is “Sailing by Moonlight” by Joan Last. In this piece, the student follows the pedal markings with maturity and expression. Students follow dynamic phrasing and present long legato lines. Both Last’s and Tanaka’s pieces require legato pedaling. The student pedals directly after they play a note, creating a seamless legato line. Both pieces require shifting hands positions throughout and maintain a singing legato line over a simple left-hand accompaniment. Tanaka’s piece shares obvious technical and compositional similarities to the Level 2 pieces by Last and Norton.

Level 3

In Level 3 students learn sonata form through Classical sonatinas. They build on Baroque dance forms and begin to “refine control of touch and tone and increase awareness of formal structure” (RCM 2015). This level focuses on developing hand coordination and rhythmic precision through the hands together technical exercises (RCM 2015). Level 3 moves away from the Inventions as students demonstrate complete hand independence. In this level, students learn irregular rhythms and pieces no longer remaining in simple time signatures. Because of the introduction of the Sonatina in List B, students become familiar with the Alberti bass. Triplets, though introduced in earlier levels, become normal within this level. Triplets, though introduced in earlier levels, become normal within this level. Students learn to develop their tone quality throughout Level 3.



Figure 9, “Clavierstück VII” by Melika M. Fitzhugh from *New Music for New Musicians* (mm. 1-5).

The piece I leveled is “Clavierstück VII” from *New Pieces for New Musicians*TM by Boston-based composer Melika M. Fitzhugh. This is in a pop-style and that fits well into List C, Level 3 repertoire. Fitzhugh composed this piece in 2019 as part of Patricia Abreau’s series *New Music for New Musicians*TM. The composition is through-composedTM but uses repetitive patterns. One of the clear focuses of level three is to “develop hand coordination and rhythmic precision” (RCM 2015) and the use of irregular time signatures (Tithecott 2015). With this piece in 7/8, the student must learn rhythmic accuracy in lining up the hands as they shift from groups of 3 to groups of 4 in 7/8 time. The right-hand gestures fit easily within the hand so the student can focus on rhythm without irregular hand shifts. In several places, such as indicated in measure 4, the student must coordinate a scalar gesture between the hands. Level 3 is the first-time students perform hands together scales. The student must balance the voices between the right hand and left hand and show clear groupings of 3 + 4 or 3 + 2 + 2 without obstructing the melodic line. The composer uses clear pedal markings throughout the piece, and the student must shift dynamics abruptly. Control of tone through touch is essential in the performance of this short but dynamic piece.



Figure 10, “Zinc Pink” by Dennis Alexander in *Celebration Series Piano Repertoire Level 3* (mm. 1-4)

A comparable Level 3 piece is “Zinc Pink” by Dennis Alexander. “Zinc Pink” is in an irregular timesignature of 5/8 where the groupings are 3 + 2. Fitzhugh’s composition is in 7/8 using 3+2+2 in most measures. Similar to Fitzhugh, Alexander writes solid harmonies in the left hand with an 8th note melody in the right hand. Students must develop a refinement of tone and voice the rhythmic groupings accurately. The right-hand gestures fit easily within the hand so the student can focus on rhythm without irregular hand shifts. Comparable to “Clavierstück VII,” Alexander notes specific pedal markings and quick changes of dynamics. “Zink Pink” and “Clavierstück VII”, though different

in sound, do not vary from each other in technical skills and compositional focus. Both pieces compare in length, technicality, and compositional style for Level 3 compositions.

Level 4

The Level 4 student is deep in intermediate repertoire and the repertoire challenges the students to explore new genres, textures, and compositional styles. According to the RCM 2015 syllabus, the sonatas present “new accompaniment styles and pianistic figurations,” and the List C pieces explore “new musical and technical challenges.” Scales and triads are in new keys. Level 4 is the first time that students perform one-handed arpeggios. Students are now reading fluently in many rhythms and are familiar with shifting time signatures. Level 4 is the first level that students must know the perfect 4th by ear and perform triadic patterns hands together. The Level 4 pianist is required to shift hand positions frequently. Students must be fluent in 2-part counterpoint, ornamentation, clear articulation, broken octaves, and contrasting themes (Tithecott 2015). Students learn to become expressive with their melodic lines and demonstrate a balance in chordal textures and accompaniments (Tithecott 2015). In Level 4 theory, students learn to read ledger lines above and below the staves for the first time.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Dusk" by Nkeiru Okoye. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of music. The first system (measures 1-4) is marked "Slowly and soulfully, with reflection" with a tempo of quarter note = 50. The key signature is E-flat minor (three flats). The time signature starts as 3/2 and changes to 3/4. The first system includes dynamics of *mp legato* and *p*, and performance instructions like "broaden". The second system (measures 5-8) is marked "a tempo" and includes a *cresc.* (crescendo) and *mp* dynamic. The score features block-chord textures and shifting time signatures.

Figure 11, “Dusk” by Nkeiru Okoye in *African Sketches* (mm. 1-8).

The piece I introduce for the Level 4 repertoire is “Dusk” by Dr. Nkeiru Okoye, an American storyteller, researcher, historian, and composer. It is in the key of E flat minor and uses many hollow perfect 5ths and 4ths in block-chord form. The Level 4 student explores new compositional textures. This piece varies from the typical melody and accompaniment texture. This piece expands the student's understanding of tonality, performing in E-flat minor. Until this point, the repertoire on the black keys uses pentatonic tonality, “Dusk” does not. Level 4 is the first time that students are required to play hands together chords, which is required throughout “Dusk.” Level 4

repertoire familiarizes shifting time signatures. “Dusk” shifts time signatures nine times, moving from regular to irregular time signatures throughout. Level 4 is the first introduction of ledger lines in *Celebrate Theory 4* which accompanies RCM Level 4. In “Dusk,” the student reads on both upper and lower ledger lines. This piece appeals to the growing maturity of tone and touch of the Level 4 student and introduces the student to unfamiliar textures and key signatures while fulfilling many of the technical requirements of Level 4.

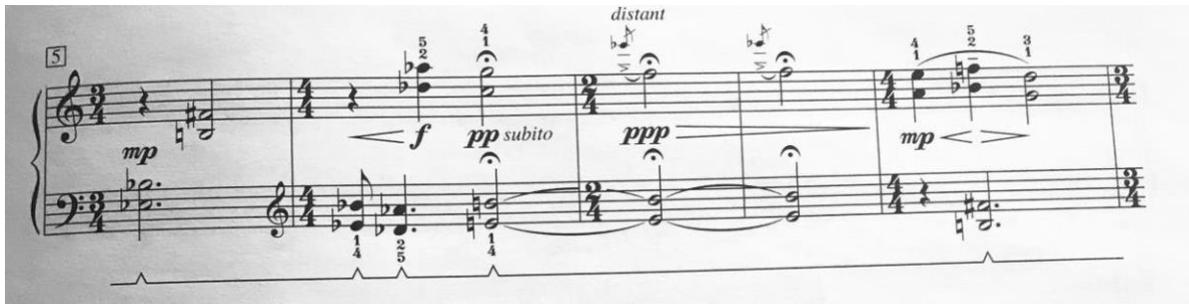


Figure 12, “Arctic Voices” by Susan Griesdale in *Celebration Series Piano Repertoire Level 3* (m. 5-9)

I chose to compare “Dusk” to a piece from the Level 3 Repertoire “Arctic Voices” by Susan Griesdale. “Arctic Voices” is a challenging piece in Level 3, List C and compares to “Dusk” in many ways. “Dusk” is longer than “Arctic Voices” and incorporates more difficult elements of the Level 4 repertoire. “Arctic Voices” moves in block chords and uses shifting time signatures and hand positions. Both pieces are slow and solemn and requires sensitivity of touch and pedaling. “Dusk” uses ledger lines in the treble clef and bass clef, and also introduces broken octaves. Level 4 is the first level that requires these two elements. “Dusk” requires a greater sense of keyboard geography with the many shifting hand positions found in the piece. Griesdale’s piece contains shifting time signatures, but never shifts to irregular time signatures, such as the 5/4 in “Dusk” (m. 22). Both pieces require sensitive pedaling, but Griesdale marks specific pedaling while Okoye does not. Both piano pieces compare in compositional style and technique, but Okoye’s piece incorporates more Level 4 elements. “Dusk” is an excellent addition to any intermediate repertoire library.

Level 5

The Level 5 pianist continues to develop with intermediate repertoire. Students begin to play longer pieces, explore different musical forms, and fuller harmonic textures (RCM 2015). They learn to maintain a more “sophisticated interplay of melody and accompaniment” (RCM 2015). Level 5 is the first level in which students learn about dominant seventh chords. Students know minor and major-6th intervals by ear and 7th chords, and students develop fluency in ornamentation. Students must demonstrate quick and precise movement between large sections of the keyboard. The Level 5

student's musical vocabulary expands, and they learn new structural forms of music (Tithecott 2015). Students show rhythmic precision and a deeper understanding of varying meters and demonstrate finger fluency through extended passagework (Tithecott 2015).



Figure 13. “Sweet Mister Jelly Roll” by Valerie Capers in *Piano Music of Africa and the African Diaspora, Vol 1*(mm.5-12).

The piece of music I discuss for Level 5 is “Sweet Mister Jelly Roll” by New York- based composer Valerie Capers. The piece is from *Portraits in Jazz*, a book of jazz pieces classically trained pianists (Walker Hill 2007). Each piece included introduces the student to a new type of jazz form or technique and is named after a famous jazz icon such as Billie Holiday or Scott Joplin. The entire collection is at a Level 4/5 ABRSM level (Capers 2015). “Sweet Mister Jelly Roll” is a ragtime, and the opening hat-tips to the “Maple Leaf Rag” by Scott Joplin, “the king” of ragtime. This piece makes frequent use of 7th chords, introduced in Level 5 technique. Quick and precise movements and an established sense of keyboard geography are necessary. Plenty of ornamentation is present throughout the piece. The ragtime is a form introduced in the Level 5, expanding the student's knowledge of dance forms and genres. One of the hallmarks of the Level 5 repertoire is that the pieces become substantially longer. This piece is 64 measures in length when including the Dal Segno and Coda. Another Level 5 skill is that students must have quick and precise finger work as is necessary for the repertoire excerpt above.



Figure 14, “Scamp” by Christopher Norton in *Celebration Series Perspectives Piano Repertoire 5* (mm. 9-17).

A comparable piece to the “Sweet Mister Jelly Roll” is “Scamp” by Christopher Norton. The pieces compare in technical difficulty and compositional style in many ways. For example, Norton’s left- hand bass line in measures 9-10 and 13-14 uses the same broken chord pattern as Capers’ piece in measures 9-12. The syncopation in the right hand of Norton’s piece in m. 12-14 compares to Capers’ in measures 9-12. Throughout both pieces, students must have quick, precise movements and an established sense of keyboard geography. Both pieces make extended use of 7th chords, as well as extensive syncopated right-hand passage-work. Though the music does not label “Scamp” as a ragtime form, it models the ragtime genre. Both “Scamp” and “Sweet Mister Jelly Roll” suit the Level 5 pianist.

Level 6

The Level 6 pianist continues to explore intermediate-level repertoire with an expanded understanding of repertoire styles and genres. New challenges include “clear voice leading in polyphonic textures, rhythmic control in longer sonatina movements, and imaginative expression in Romantic repertoire” (RCM 2015). In Level 6, there are new key signatures, quicker tempos, and a more developed understanding of harmonies through the introduction of diminished 7th chords, cadences, and greater technical control through the technical-tests. New musical forms include 2-3-part dances and preludes (Tithecott 2015). Students learn octave passages for the first time and must have an advanced command of pulse, mature voice control, and balance in melody projection, and pedaling (Tithecott 2015). Similar, to Level 5, the length of pieces increases.



Figure 15, “Rippling Spring Waltz” by Estelle Ricketts in *Black Women Composers: A Century of Piano Music* (mm. 14-25).

The piece I introduce for Level 6 is the “Rippling Spring Waltz” by Estelle Ricketts. Ricketts is noted as the first Black female composer to publish in North America. “Rippling Spring Waltz” is an excellent composition for the developing pianist. The waltz is lengthy, but the difficulty level remains consistent throughout the piece. This piece, though a waltz, exemplifies many of the same technical difficulties of a classical sonatina, using quick scalar passages, and requiring advanced understanding of pedaling, and a clear melodic line. The scalar passages require technical and rhythmic control. Students learn about cadences in Level 6 theory and perform them in their technical exercises. “Rippling Spring Waltz” displays clear cadential points at the closing of each segment. There is brief right-hand octave passagework in m. 65-87 of this waltz, as is common in Level 6 repertoire. The Level 6 repertoire introduces students to Romantic-era waltzes. This piece compares in difficulty to easier Chopin and Schubert waltzes. Through “Rippling Spring Waltz,” students display mature voice control between the hands, and present a clear melodic line, all while maintaining a refined sense of pedaling. “Rippling Spring Waltz” exemplifies the many qualities required in the Level 6 repertoire and echoes the techniques found in the Clementi and Kulau Sonatinas and the Chopin Waltzes.



Figure 16, “Sonatina in C Major, Movement 1: Allegro” by Muzio Clementi in *Sonatinas for the Piano, Book 1, No 1* (mm.30-32).

The “Rippling Spring Waltz” compares to Kulau's *Sonatina in C major*, movement I. Both pieces compare in length and difficulty. The Kulau Sonatina requires brief octave work in the left hand, while the Rickett's waltz requires brief octave work in the right hand. Both pieces have defined sections and show clear cadential points. The scalar passagework compares from 16th notes to 8th notes in an ascending to descending passagework as shown in m. 30-32 in the Kulau and measures 17-19 in the Ricketts. These passages require rhythmic precision and accuracy. Both pieces do not mark pedaling require the pianist to add pedal. In both pieces the pianist demonstrates mature voice control and clear melody projection, and requires observations about compositional structure, genre, and form.

Level 7

The Level 7 repertoire begins to cross the divide between intermediate and advanced piano. The List A repertoire continues with advancing Baroque dances and branches into two-part inventions (RCM 2015). The List B repertoire now breaks into more advanced sonatinas and full-length sonatas, while the List C repertoire continues to explore well-known Romantic era music. In Level 7, students begin to use four-note chords in their technique and perform all the technical exercises hands together. Octave passagework becomes more frequent throughout the repertoire. Students begin to expand their musicality through abstract musical thinking, irregular phrase lengths, and advanced modality (Tithecott 2015). Pedaling is increasingly more refined and usually remains unmarked in music. Students develop a mature musical tone through body-music awareness with technical development (Tithecott 2015).

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Mayflower" by Beverley McKiver. It consists of three systems of piano notation, each with a treble and bass clef. The first system starts with a tempo marking of "Slowly" and a metronome marking of quarter note = 44. The second system is marked "Jauntily" with a metronome marking of quarter note = 92. The third system includes a tempo change marking: "poco rit. a tempo". Dynamics markings include *pp* (pianissimo) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The score features various rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and rests.

Figure 17, “Mayflower” by Beverley McKiver in *Canadian Floral Emblems* (mm. 1-12).

The piece I chose for Level 7 is “Mayflower” by Ottawa-based composer Beverley McKiver from her set *Canadian Floral Emblems*. A mayflower is the provincial flower of Nova Scotia. Mayflower is an elegant nocturne that fits well into the List C repertoire of Level 7. In Levels 7 and 8, students learn nocturne bass lines in which the left-hand plays seamless arpeggio passages as the right-hand carries the melodic line. A hallmark of the Level 7 repertoire is an advanced sense of accompaniment styles. The pedaling in this piece is unmarked, so the student must perform with a refined sense of pedaling. As shown in measures 9-10, this piece uses octaves in the right hand and several places throughout the piece. The student must develop a fine sense of rhythmic control and precision throughout this piece in order to perform the shifting time signatures. This piece uses irregular phrase lengths, often breaking from traditional 4 measure phrases. Lastly, this nocturne requires a mature sense of tone and arm-weight as the melodic line switches from single notes to octaves while softening the dynamics (ex. m. 9-10).



Figure 18, “Arietta, op. 43, no. 7” by Reinhold Glière in *Celebration Series Perspectives Piano Repertoire 7* (mm. 35-45).

“Arietta” is a nocturne-like 20th-century piece by Reinhold Glière which compares in style and difficulty to “Mayflower.” In m. 35-45 of “Arietta” the right-hand plays the melodic line while the left-hand provides a nocturne bass underneath, identical in technique to “Mayflower.” In both pieces, the pedal is unmarked, and the pianist must rely on their ear to determine the pedaling. Both pieces often break away from traditional 4-measure phrases. “Arietta,” like “Mayflower,” requires a mature sense of tone and arm-weight as the melodic line switches from single notes to thirds while softening the dynamics (ex. m. 41-42). The right-hand rhythmic motifs are similar in both pieces. “Mayflower” uses 16th-note figures in the right hand in measures 1, 3, and 5, and “Arietta” uses 16th-note ornaments in the right hand in measures 35, 43, and 45. “Arietta” and “Mayflower” compare in length, technical and musical challenges, and make similar contributions to Level 7 repertoire.

Level 8

Level 8 continues the transition from intermediate to advanced repertoire. The repertoire lists divide into four with List A: Baroque, List B: Classical, List C: Romantic, and List D: Post-Romantic, 20th -, and 21st-century repertoire. The Level 8 student must have an advanced sense of musicality and display specific characteristics from each musical period. The technical requirements increase to include four-octave scales and arpeggios, and quicker tempi. The repertoire explores the full range of the instrument and begins to introduce advanced piano masterworks. Some hallmarks of Level 8 repertoire are expressive and lyrical romanticism, polyrhythms, quartal harmonies, harmonies that span past the octave and rolled chords (Tithecott 2015). The Level 8 student handles lengthy repertoire with an advanced sense of musical awareness and explores abstract musicality through modes and demonstrating colour and atmosphere.



Figure 19, “Valsa de salão” by Chiquinha Gonzaga from *Dança das fadas* (mm. 95-107).

This Romantic-era waltz is from the end of the 20th century as part of Brazilian composer Chiquinha Gonzaga’s dances. The Level 8 repertoire introduces students to the waltzes by Schubert, Chopin, and Brahms. Gonzaga’s waltzes are similar to Romantic waltzes in style and technique. “Valsa de salão” is lengthy, but maintains the same difficulty throughout, requiring focus and musical commitment. This waltz requires the student to expand both their hands beyond the octave and uses rolled chords, as shown in measures 96 and 103. The waltz bass-line is played by the left hand, while the right hand communicates expressive and lyrical romanticism. In Level 8 repertoire, four-note forms, and octave passagework become lengthy and more frequent. These technical elements are present throughout Gonzaga’s piece. The pianist must be expressive in setting mood and atmosphere and requires detailed pedaling and advanced technicality throughout using extended right-hand passagework. Though this piece is longer many in Level 8, it sits within the same technical difficulty as other Romantic-style waltzes.

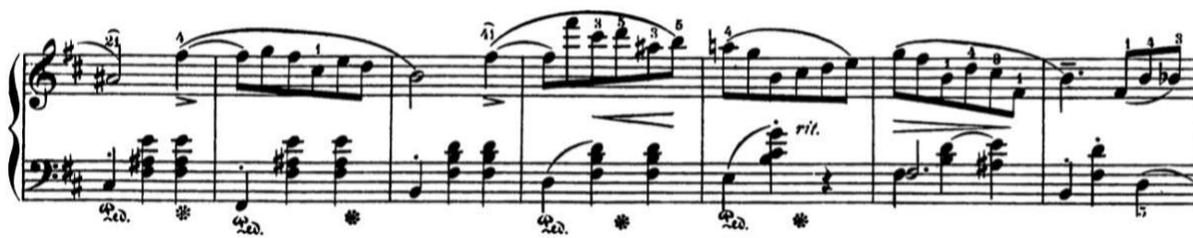


Figure 20, “Waltz in B Minor op. 69, No. 2” by Frédéric Chopin from *Waltzes for the pianoforte, Volume VI* (mm. 138-144).

Gonzaga’s waltz compares to Chopin’s *Waltz in B minor*. As displayed in the above example, the Chopin waltz uses the traditional waltz bass-line with a melody line that expresses lyrical romanticism. The piece explores the full range of the piano and requires immense focus and musical commitment. Throughout this piece, students must play frequent four-note forms in the left-hand and octave passagework. Both pieces are rhythmically similar in both the treble and bass clefs. Identical to Gonzaga’s, Chopin’s waltz requires the pianist to be expressive in setting the mood and atmosphere and advanced technicality through the extended right-hand passagework. Both pieces require the pianist to be proficient in “waltz pedaling,” where the damper pedal is placed rhythmically on beat one and released as soon as the final LH harmony of that measure is placed on beat three as shown above in m. 138-139. Chopin and Gonzaga’s waltzes are incredibly similar, while Gonzaga’s waltz contributes to the understanding of the dance styles that exist beyond Euro-western traditions.

Level 9

The Level 9 repertoire moves into larger-scale advanced piano works. The pianist explores three and four-voice Baroque works, larger Classical sonatas, and character pieces from Romantic to contemporary styles (RCM 2015). The technical requirements increase, and students are now able to play in all key signatures. The repertoire is far less pedagogical as students now delve into the advanced repertoire. In Level 9, students are deep into music history and analysis and must develop a knowledge of styles within each historical period. Harmonic ideas in the repertoire include secondary and applied dominants as they relate to intense emotions, the use of passionate dissonance, and advanced tonal colours (Tithecott 2015). The repertoire becomes increasingly subjective as students explore more musical genres and styles. Hallmarks of Romantic era music in Level 9 are increasingly challenging mazurkas and waltzes. Students must have advanced technical control and focus for

communicating longer repertoire and concert programs. Musical maturity through expression is essential as the student explores the emotional and dynamic capabilities of the music.

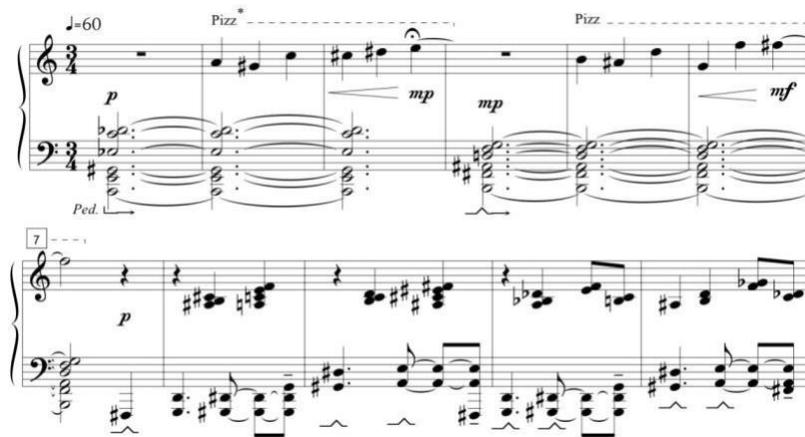


Figure 21, "Hiding" by Karen Sunabacka (mm. 1-11).

The piece I discuss for Level 9 is "Hiding" by composer Karen Sunabacka who is based out of Waterloo, Ontario. "Hiding" is a piece for the early-advanced pianist exploring contemporary repertoire. This piece uses extended techniques by plucking the strings on the inside of the piano, as shown in measures 2-7. This piece is atonal, although there are moments of cadential release throughout. In Level 9 music history, students learn about contemporary-classical music and atonal music. The repertoire of Level 9 encourages students to explore the techniques that align with the contemporary movement through the music of living composers, extended techniques, and atonal music. This piece displays passionate dissonance through heavy chromaticism and the juxtaposition of flats and sharps between the hands. This piece requires an advanced sense of pedaling. "Hiding" is in a waltz style but does not conform to traditional waltz pedaling as indicated in the score by Sunabacka. This piece displays frequent tempo, time signature, and stylistic changes. Level 9 requires students to be fluent in Mazurka's and Waltzes. Mazurkas are a dance in triple time and characterized by unpredictable and shifting accents. "Hiding" demonstrates these qualities as the accents shift in the left hand (ex. measures 8-11), and throughout the right-hand melody. The pizzicatos on the strings inside the piano help expand the use of tonal colours. This piece is harmonically expressive and technically and rhythmically complex and contains many characteristics of the Level 9 contemporary repertoire.

Level 10

The Level 10 pianist is establishing their artistic voice through demanding repertoire and additional styles. The Level 10 repertoire lists are as follows: List A: A work by J.S. Bach, List B: Classical repertoire, List C: Romantic repertoire, List D: Post-Romantic, Impressionist, and early 20th-century repertoire, List E: 20th and 21st-century repertoire. Students must perform three- and four-part

counterpoint and multiple contrasting sonata movements (RCM 2015). The contemporary and romantic repertoire becomes increasingly more advanced. In Level 10, a successful exam student prepares a program comparable to a full solo recital. Level 10 is the final level that students are required to perform the technical tests. The Level 10 technical requirements are extensive, requiring knowledge of all keys signatures, intervals, and basic harmony. Students must have extensive knowledge of western music history and theoretically analyze the music, performing basic keyboard harmony. The Level 10 repertoire includes extended passagework, active accompaniment, intricate melody lines, large hand extensions, and challenging figurations (Tithecott 2015). The pianist must be able to show subtle nuance within their tone, pedaling, and phrasing.

The piece I introduce in Level 10 repertoire is the second movement of American composer Florence Price's *Piano Sonata in E minor*, ii. Andante. The Piano Sonata in E minor is a lengthy twenty-five-minute piece, following traditional sonata form with movement-one being in Sonata-Allegro form, a slow second movement, and a quick Scherzo-Allegro movement to close. While the entire work is at a Diploma level, each movement stands well alone. The "Andante" is the easier of the three movements and compares to Chopin's Nocturnes or Brahms's Intermezzi. "Andante" is in Rondo form, and the rondo theme mimics the themes of spirituals. The contrasting middle themes imitate the styles of Chopin and Schumann, according to Price. In Level 10, students must perform contrasting movements of piano sonatas outside of sonata-allegro form. Students need an extensive knowledge of music history and how it informs performance practice. They must know style and genres within each historical period. When learning this rondo, the student learns about the African-American spiritual. This piece encourages a deep look into the historical contributions of Florence Price.

The image displays a musical score for the 'Andante' movement of Florence Price's Piano Sonata in E minor, measures 1-8. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows measures 1-4, and the second system shows measures 5-8. The tempo is marked 'Andante' at the beginning. The first system includes dynamic markings of *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The second system includes dynamic markings of *mp*, *mf*, *f* (forte), and *poco rit.* (poco ritardando). The score features a mix of treble and bass clefs, with various musical notations including notes, rests, and phrasing slurs.

Figure 22, "Andante" by Florence Price in *Sonata in E minor* (mm. 1-8).

The first phrase shown above is the rondo theme. The theme is not from a specific spiritual but rather is intended to emulate the style of spirituals, using a lyrical upper line, syncopated rhythms, and uncomplicated harmonies (Brown 1997), though researcher Dr. Samantha Ege believes that it echoes the melody of “By an’ By” by Harry T. Burleigh (Ege 2020). Many of the gestures throughout the theme required rolled chords, spanning greater than an octave. This technique is reminiscent of Brahms’s *intermezzi*.



Figure 23, *Intermezzo Op. 118, no. 2* by Johannes Brahms (mm. 5-10).

Price’s technique in voicing the top melodic line through the upper right-hand notes, while maintaining several moving harmonic voices beneath the melody is identical to the technique in Brahms’ *Intermezzo Op 18, no. 2*. The top of the right-hand carries the melody, while the bottom voices harmonize. Price’s rhythms are admittedly more complex. Both pieces require the same warmth and maturity of sound, mastery of pedaling, and the ability to voice a lyrical melodic line. In Level 10, students learn to handle multi-voice textures in music other than the Baroque repertoire. As mentioned early, a hallmark genre found in Level 10 repertoire is the nocturne through Chopin’s pieces. Price models parts of the “Andante” after Chopin’s nocturnes as well as his preludes. I now discuss what I believe to be a connection between Price’s *Andante* and Chopin’s *Nocturnes*.

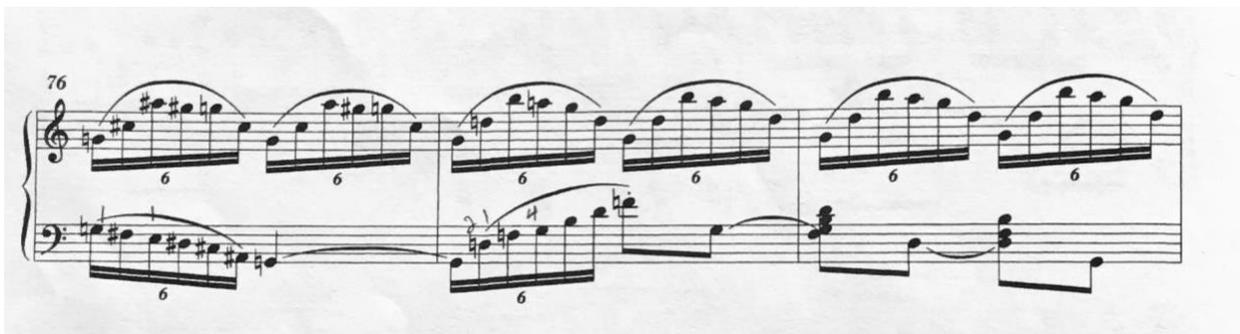


Figure 24, “Andante” by Florence Price in *Sonata in E minor* (mm. 76-78).

In measures 76, the right-hand has a repetitive sextuplet figure in the treble clef with a chromatic bassline in measure 76 and moving to a nocturne like bass in measures 77 and finally a melodic descending bass in measures 77-78.



Figure 25, “Nocturne in F major, op. 15, no. 1” by Frédéric Chopin in *Nocturnes for the Pianoforte* (mm. 28-30).

The above example of Chopin’s Nocturne in F major, and though the tempo is considerably different from the Price in measures 76-78, the techniques are identical with a nocturne bass in the left hand in measure 28 moving to a melodic descending bass line in measures 29-30. Similar to the Price, the right hand has a repeating septuplet pattern in the treble clef.



Figure 26, “Andante” by Florence Price in *Sonata in E minor* (mm. 61-63).

The longest contrasting theme is the “Schumann” theme (Brown 1997, Ege 2020). The theme begins in m. 50 and continues to the end of measure 71. The melodic theme is the spiritual melody stated at the beginning (Ege 2020, p.97) and treated as a vocal melody in the right-hand octaves, with the accompaniment pattern imitating Schumann’s Lieder accompaniment. This piece is rich in both musical historical significance, theoretical depth and is comparable to the many Romantic-Era pieces found within the Level 10 repertoire.

Diploma Level

The final level I discuss in my assessment of music by BIPOC female composers is the Associate Diploma Level (ARCT). The Associate level is the capstone of conservatory levels in Canada, where the pianist performs a full solo recital. The Associate diploma qualifies a pianist to become a fully registered music teacher within Canada and is considered the equivalent performance level as a university performance major. The ARCT pianist communicates music with confidence and a virtuosic command of the instrument, and fully understands the stylistic demands of each musical period and perform proficiently with a high level of musicality. The ARCT pianist performs with musical maturity, technical facility, and an extensive knowledge of piano repertoire (Tithecott 2015). The pianist may study ARCT repertoire for years. The final piece I discuss is “Troubled Waters” by American composer Margaret Bonds from her *Spiritual Suite*. The work is a theme and variations on the Spiritual “Wade in the Water,” attributed to Harriet Tubman. The lyrics read:

Wade in the water
Wade in the water, children
Wade in the water
God's gonna trouble the water (Fisk 1901)

Bonds plays on the lyric “God’s gonna trouble the water” in which she “troubles” or varies the theme in multiple forms throughout the piece. “Troubled Waters” challenges the technical abilities of the pianist and requires an authoritative and virtuosic command of the piano similar to a Chopin Ballade. The pianist must also voice the melodic theme above multiple layers of harmonic texture, similar to a Bach fugue.

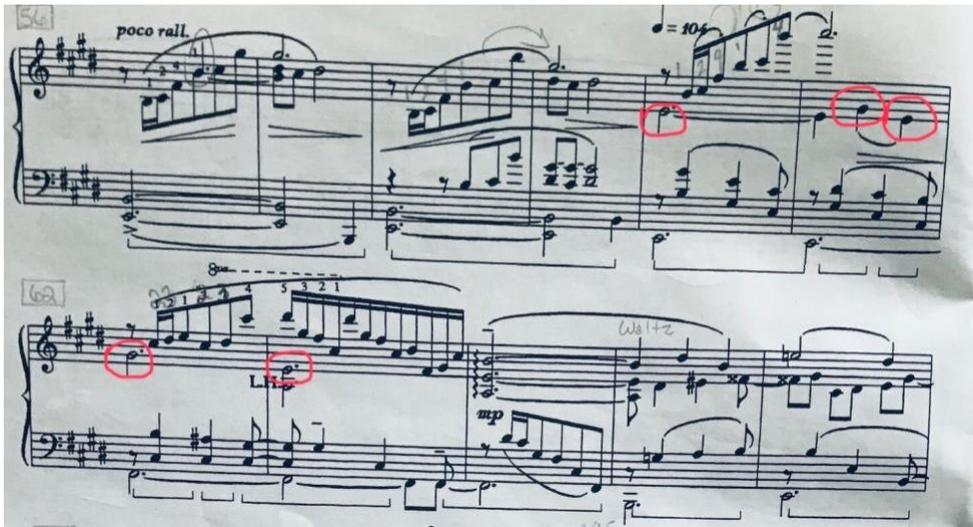


Figure 27, “Troubled Water” by Margaret Bonds in *The Spiritual Suite* (mm. 56-66).

In the passage above, the pianist voices the melody, circled in red, while performing quick and complex accompaniment material in the extremities of the piano. The melodic line trades between the right hand and the left hand, a technique identical to Liszt’s “Un Sospiro.”



Figure 28, “Un Sospiro” Franz Liszt in *3 Études de concert*, S. 144 (mm. 3-4).

Though the layout is different between the two passages, the technical requirements are the same. 16th-note passages split between the hands, while the left and right hands alternate melody notes in the upper staff. The left hand plays the downward-facing notes in the top staff of “Un Sospiro,” while the right hand plays the upward-facing notes. Both hands take turns with the accompaniment figures and the melodic line, just as in measures 60-64 of “Troubled Water.”



Figure 29, “Troubled Water” by Margaret Bonds in *The Spiritual Suite* (mm. 72-81).



Figure 30, “Ballade I in G minor” by Frédéric Chopin in Op. 53 (mm. 8-16).

The techniques present in figures 29 and 30 are effectively the same. The upper right hand performs the melody in long notes presented in the notes with upward stems at the top of the treble clef, while the bass and alto voices carry a rhythmic pattern beneath it. Though the time signatures and rhythms differ between the two pieces, the applied technique is the same. “Troubled Water” is technically demanding, pianistically virtuosic, and theoretically complex. Bonds was an important contributor to the Black Chicago Renaissance and advocated for other Women of Colour. She “troubled the waters” by challenging societal assumptions about her gender and race. Bonds stirred up “good trouble” through her music and profoundly impacted racial-gender inclusion within the classical music canon.

In my work, I found it exceedingly difficult to choose composers and pieces to feature, as there is a wealth of published, circulating music by Women of Colour. It is

evident that Women of Colour have and continue to make profound contributions to piano literature both historically and presently. Many of these composers, such as Price, Lee, Tan, Bonds, and McKiver are piano teachers themselves, and compose with the student and performer in mind. The pieces presented in this essay differ in genre, era, technique, and style, and their contributions span hundreds of years. There is no concrete reason for Black, Indigenous, and Women of Colour to make up less than 1% of the 20th and 21st-century repertoire lists. This essay barely scratches the surface of the important contributions of piano repertoire that Women of Colour bring to the piano canon. To echo the words of Tarana Burke, “If we don’t centre the voices of marginalized people, we’re doing the wrong work.” It is due time for piano teachers and conservatories to recognize the immense contributions to the piano canon by Women of Colour. When teachers change the narrative of who is included within piano lesson repertoire, it transforms our teaching, our studio spaces, our concert programming, and the future generations of music teachers. The BIPOC women represented within this essay and thousands more like them are loud and clear. It is time to listen.

Level	Piece	Composer	Publishing
Prep	Playful Ponies	Chee-Hwa Tan	http://chee-hwa.com/blog/
Level 1	Mirror, Mirror, Who is that in the Mirror?	Hope Lee	Furore-Verlag
Level 2	Sea Turtle	Karen Tanaka	Chester Music Ltd.
Level 3	Clavierstück VII	Melika M. Fitzhugh	melikamfitzhugh.com
Level 4	Dusk	Nkeiru Okoye	Oxford University Press
Level 5	Sweet Mister Jelly Roll	Valerie Capers	Oxford University Press
Level 6	Rippling Spring Waltz	Estelle Ricketts	Hildegard Music Publishing
Level 7	Mayflower	Beverley McKiver	beverleymckiver.com
Level 8	Valsa de salão	Chiquinha Gonzaga	Dança das fadas
Level 9	Hiding	Karen Sunabacka	Canada Music Centre
Level 10	Sonata in E minor, II. Andante	Florence Price	Schirmer
Diploma	Troubled Waters	Margaret Bonds	Hildegard Music Publishing

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