

Performance Notes

1. Now We're Talking!

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This was inspired by a 70s/80s TV chat show themes - try to imagine the kind of orchestration that might be used in this setting. You should aim for a confident swing feel and good dynamic contrast.

2. White Balloon

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Inspired by Satie's "Gymnopedies", this simple, gentle piece will benefit from a subtle rubato feel. The dotted quavers should not be played in swing, and could even be stretched nearer a double-dotted feel. In the LH, aim to strike the chords precisely, with no arpeggiation.

3. If Only You Had Told Me

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A slow, hymn-like gospel ballad. Take care to observe the hand-swapping between the voices, and aim for a clear, lyrical tone in the melody, and build to a spirited crescendo on the final page.

4. The Ha'penny Rag

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(Pronounced "haypny"), this is a traditional rag in straight time. The final page is clearly the trickiest in this piece, but it so happens that the entire RH of this page can be played comfortably without looking at it; master this, and you should find you can focus your attention on the LH jumps.

5. It's Groovy, I Guess?

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In both the opening theme and the Coda, aim for a confident swing and a clear contrast in tone for the middle section. The unison parts must be well co-ordinated and carefully articulated, so they sound suitably punchy.

6. You Gotta Be Kidding?

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The main theme is intended to be a study in articulation for both hands, whilst the middle section is a study in rhythmic co-ordination. It is important that you don't take it too fast, or the L/R interplay in the middle section will become blurred. Those of you with digital pianos might try playing this using a vintage electric piano sound.

7. Better Late Than Never

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Inspired in part by Carole King's song "It's Too Late", as well as Bob James' famous theme "Angela" also known as the theme from "Taxi". This piece needs to be played with clearly defined articulation in the RH, so you will need to pay close attention to the slurs and accents. Again, worth it's worth experimenting with vintage electric piano sounds, if your instrument has them.

8. The Blue Train

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As with all blues/boogie pieces that use a LH ostinato, never underestimate how much practice you need to do on the LH before you can expect any measure of success in putting in hands together! If you are careful to observe the suggestion to bring your thumb in to the last note of each cycle, you should find you experience far less fatigue.

9. The Moon, The Pearl

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Inspired in part by the hypnotic sound of Alice Coltrane's harp playing on albums such as "Journey In Satchidananda" and "Ptah, The El Daoud". Take your time to really get the feel of the opening groove - once you settle into it, it's not so difficult. It will also help to analyse how this pattern is developed through the 16-bar cycle - once you're comfortable with this, the melodic fragments should slip into place fairly easily. The ascending arpeggio at the start is based on C minor pentatonic scale, and the one at the very end is based on the F minor pentatonic - learning these scales first should help considerably.

10. The Jazz Beans Boogie

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Inspired by traditional boogie-woogie, this piece uses a fairly unconventional 2-bar cycle in the LH. Again, practice the LH until you can play it without even thinking - try it with your eyes closed, holding a conversation, reading a book, etc! Feel free to take this piece at a slower tempo if you like.

11. Blue Sky Blues

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The intro should be whimsical and nostalgic and feel like somewhat like an improvisation. Once you hit the main theme, aim to keep a steady, upbeat tempo throughout. Careful preparation of the phrases leading into the turn-arounds is advised - e.g. bars 27-30 and similar.

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