

Prelude in B minor by J.S. Bach arr. Siloti

This prelude was originally composed by J.S. Bach in the key of E minor in 1722 as part of The Well-Tempered Clavier. Virtuoso and composer, Alexander Siloti in the 20th century decided to transpose it to the key of b minor and dedicated the new arrangement to his daughter, Kyriena. In Bach's prelude, the 16th note figures were composed for the left hand but Siloti decided to flip to the right hand to accommodate a change of voicing and melody in the bass.

The Piano at the Palace Beautiful by Marti Epstein

A couple of years ago, Don Berman asked me to compose a piano piece for him which was to be a response to Little Women by Louisa May Alcott. What a fitting request this was, as Little Women was a book I read many, many times when I was a child. Just recently, my book group read it, and as part of my journey into the Persian language, I have also been reading an abridged version in Farsi.

As a young girl, I was well-aware that Alcott was presenting Jo, the second of the four March sisters, as the one her readers should identify with, or at least aspire to be like. However, I clearly remember being very annoyed with certain aspects of Jo's personality, and while I admired her independence and her devotion to both her art and her family, it was- and still is- Beth whom I loved best.

When I was 7, I lost a little brother. After that, I became obsessed with stories of people, especially young people, dying. Scenes describing Beth's initial illness (scarlet fever), recovery, and second fatal illness (which is never defined, but one surmises that it might have been cancer) became etched in my brain. I read those passages over and over again, almost as a kind of catharsis. She dies, but then we can open the book at the beginning and see her alive again. This was extremely powerful for me as a child coping with my own loss.

Beth also clearly suffers from some kind of social anxiety. Her reticence about speaking to people outside of the comfort of her family, her complete lack of curiosity about the world outside her home, was oddly fascinating and resonant..

The only thing that brought her out of her shell was music. Many mentions are made early on in the book about her passion for playing the piano. One of my most favorite scenes in the book is when, after being invited by Old Mr. Laurence to come to his mansion next door to play the neglected piano that had belonged to his daughter, Beth timidly enters the house- The Palace Beautiful- and begins to play (we shouldn't forget how brave this was for her). Old Mr. Laurence is up in his study listening to her. My piece is an imagining of what he might have heard; not only what she actually played, but how his memory may have filtered and altered the sound of the piano wafting up the stairs.

This begs the question of what Beth actually played on the piano. While I love Greta Gerwig's recent film of Little Women, I very much object to the use of Beethoven and Chopin as the pieces Beth would have played. It's not clear she actually took lessons, and there are several mentions of "books of hymns" that she liked to play through. In my imagination, she actually isn't that technically proficient, but rather has a deep, heartfelt love of the tactile sensation of touching the keys and the resulting sound that pours out. In my imagination, she plays through hymns and possibly even improvises as she becomes lost in her own world. My

piece takes a Methodist Hymn, Fortitude (music by David Smith, words by Maltbie Babcock) as scaffolding around which I layers other kinds of sonorities that I imagine she either plays or Mr. Laurence hears (or both).

All four March sisters are creative; I think Beth has the richest and deepest inner life which she expresses through playing the piano.

snow day by Ryan Suleiman

The beginning of a blizzard is just a few tiny, delicate snowflakes floating down from the sky, like nothing. Then slowly, incrementally, there is an accumulation. After a few hours, visibility is zero. Finally, when you can see again, the world is covered in a pristine blanket of white. This gradual process captivated me as I worked on this piece.

Many thanks for the collaboration of Sakurako Kanemitsu, who premiered the piece and offered critical feedback during the creative process.

Siciliano by J.S. Bach arr. Hughes

Loosely associated with Sicily, the siciliano evokes a pastoral mood and is often found as a movement within larger pieces of music starting in the Baroque period. The original "Siciliano" was composed by J.S. Bach was written for flute and harpsichord. It was later arranged for solo piano by pianist and music editor, Edwin Hughes in the 1920s.

Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58 by Frederic Chopin

Completed in 1844, this sonata is the final sonata Chopin would ever compose. Dedicated to his dear friend and patron, Countess Élise de Perthuis, Chopin premiered this sonata at one of their "dinner at Perthuis" salon events. This sonata became one of his most important works and is thought to be one of the central works of Romanticism for its extremely virtuosic passages and musical depth.