

Cornelius Cardew Two Books of Study for Pianists/Music for two pianos
Book One

The image shows a handwritten musical score on a page with a grid of vertical lines. The left side of the page is dominated by a dense, chaotic scribble of black ink, covering several staves. To the right of this scribble, the staves are mostly empty, with a few scattered musical symbols: a diamond shape on a staff, a triangle on a staff, a sharp sign (#) on a staff, and a square on a staff. At the top left, there is a vertical line with a circle and a triangle above it. At the bottom left, there is a square. At the bottom right, there is a lowercase letter 'b'. A large, diagonal watermark reading 'Preview File Only' is overlaid across the center of the page.

TWO BOOKS OF STUDY FOR PIANISTS

The work is to be played on two pianos. The first pianist plays Book I and the second plays Book II. Each Book consists of sixteen pages which are written for convenience so that one page represents one minute. Spread over the total time-span are numerous groups of musical events; the beginning and end of each such group is shown by a barline and a time-indication in seconds. The significance of this notation is best explained by an example:

The first group of Book I begins at 16" after the beginning of the piece and ends at 2' 50" after the beginning of the piece. In this space of time (from 16" to 2' 50") the sounds in this group are to be freely distributed, but with the following limitations:

- (1) all sounds must be played
- (2) each sound is to be played only once
- (3) the sounds are to be played in the order in which they are written.

These three rules should be observed in respect of every group in the piece.

Each group can be likened to a rod with a certain number of beads (sounds) on it and a fixed knob (time-indication) at each end. The beads cannot be removed from the rod (i.e. omitted), nor can they change their order on the rod; but they can slide to and fro on the rod (i.e. the rhythm in which the sounds are presented is free).

The second group in Book I is treated in the same way as the first, it runs from 1' 38" to 2' 40"; and must consequently be superimposed in some way on the first group. The sounds of the second group may be folded in amongst the sounds of the first group, or the sounds of the two groups may coincide or overlap. Thus the piece is a study for the pianists not only in the rhythmic presentation of sounds in time, it is also a study in combining sounds from several groups in counterpoint, and then combining these sounds with those presented by the other pianist.

Explanation of the Symbols

There are three symbols for dynamics:

- ^ loud
- > medium
- v soft

Each pianist should decide for each group whether it will be generally loud or generally soft. The symbols therefore mean either loud, medium and soft in *piano*, or loud, medium and soft in *forte*. In a loud group they may be read thus:

- ^ fff
- > f
- v mp

and in a soft group they may be read thus:

- ^ mf
- > p
- v ppp

There are three symbols for durations:

- staccato
- (-) medium duration (e.g. up to ca. 1")
- long duration (e.g. anything more than 1")
- (-) is an extension of this last symbol. It is generally used to suggest that these notes should overlap the next sound, or be held to extinction, or indefinitely (for the purpose of resonating other notes as harmonics).

Various groups present sequences of sounds to be played periodically or as fast as possible. The notation for these is as follows:

If, in one of these sequences of sounds, the beam is broken as shown on the first stem in each of the above signs, this means that the notes or clusters on that stem are to be played separately and in an order chosen by the pianist, but in the same periodic (tempo) as the rest. The following is a simple example from Book I, together with the two possible interpretations.

Two specific kinds of keyboard attack are used frequently:

- ∞ strike the key, release it and retake it immediately, retaining a faint echo of the sound.
- ∞ Carefully depress the key as far as the jack without sounding, and then take it sharply the rest of the way. This produces a soft sound with a dulled attack.

Notes above the oblique stroke are read in treble clef, those below in bass. If only two notes or clusters are written with a double clef, the oblique stroke is omitted and the higher note is read in treble clef and the lower in bass.

♯ above a sound means one octave higher. Below a sound it means one octave lower.

All clusters should include all black and white keys between the limits indicated.

An accidental applies only to the note it is written against. The use of the pedals is left to the discretion of the pianists. The 'third pedal' (sustaining pedal) will be found useful.

If the above explanation of the symbols seems in any way incomplete, it may be supplemented by a study of the Version printed in this volume, which I have tried to make as orthodox as possible.

Performing Procedure

One of the players takes two wound stop-watches and starts them simultaneously. He hands one of them to his partner and each pianist places his watch in a position such that he can see it clearly throughout the performance. The watches run throughout the performance and the players refer to them to observe the timings indicated in the score.

There are three ways of performing the piece, which correspond in varying degree to the intentions of the composer and the nature of the piece.

(1) The simplest way of playing the piece is to use the version that is printed in this volume. For a performance of this kind two copies of the score are necessary. In such a performance there is little justification for the title 'Two Books of Study for Pianists' and it should be programmed simply as 'Music for Two Pianos'. Notes on how the version may be interpreted will be found inside the back cover.

(2) Each player may take his book and make his own version of it, either in collaboration with his partner or independently. In either case the version should be somewhat flexible and allow of adjustments being made in rehearsal and performance. If this method is employed it will probably be found impracticable to use the empty system at the bottom of each page for writing the version; it is generally preferable to use separate music paper.

(3) The players are so familiar with the material that they can rehearse and improvise a performance straight from the score, using the empty system at the bottom of each page for sorting out any passages that appear too complex to be controlled in the head. Decisions about dynamics can be written straight into the score, as well as supplementary time-indications, and ideas on useful combinations, etc.

The total duration of the work in performance is fifteen minutes.

Book I

16"

The image shows a musical score on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The notation includes a treble clef with a sharp sign, a bass clef with a flat sign, and various musical symbols such as a fermata, a slur, and a dynamic marking. A large, diagonal watermark reading "Preview File Only" is overlaid on the score.

Two sets of empty musical staves, each consisting of five lines, positioned at the bottom of the page.