

BRIDGING THE GAP FROM SONATINA TO SONATA
WITH JOHANN WILHELM HÄSSLER:
AN INTRODUCTION AND PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO SELECTED MOVEMENTS
FROM HÄSSLER'S *SIX EASY SONATAS* 1, 2, AND 6

by

HYORIM LEE

(Under the Direction of Richard Zimdars)

ABSTRACT

Johann Wilhelm Hässler's *Six Easy Sonatas* fills the transitional gap from intermediate to early-advanced level in the Classic style between the sonatinas of Clementi and Kuhlau and the more advanced level of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven sonatas. All five movements examined in chapter four of this study meet this goal, providing students with music of good quality. They feature a variety of compositional styles, imaginative use of detailed dynamic markings, nontraditional phrase lengths, varied touch types and articulations, intricate rhythms, and improvisational and unpredictable musical events. Technical challenges found in these movements include parallel thirds and sixths, different types of ornaments, arpeggios, scales, and broken chords.

The document contains: an introductory chapter; a short biography of Hässler; general remarks on Hässler's keyboard output and the *Six Easy Sonatas*; a pedagogical examination of five movements from Sonata Nos. 1, 2, and 6 from the *Six Easy Sonatas*; a conclusion. Appendix A lists the difficulty level of each movement of the *Six Easy Sonatas* and Appendix B contains the script for the document's required lecture-recital.

INDEX WORDS: Piano pedagogy, intermediate level piano literature, late-intermediate piano literature, early advanced piano literature, Johann Wilhelm Hässler, piano sonata, classic era piano music

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HYORIM LEE

B. M. in Piano Performance
KyungBok College, Namyangju, South Korea, 1994

B. M. in Piano Performance and Pedagogy
Staatliche Hochschule für Musik Trossingen, Trossingen, Germany, 2000

M. M. in Piano Performance
Staatliche Hochschule für Musik Trossingen, Trossingen, Germany, 2002

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HYORIM LEE

Major Professor:	Richard Zimdars
Committee:	Peter Jutras
	Stephen Valdez

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2016

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Musical examples are from the *Six Easy Sonatas* by Johann Wilhelm Hässler,
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the usual process of piano study, progressing from late-intermediate level sonatinas by Clementi and Kuhlau to early-advanced level sonatas by Mozart and Haydn can be troublesome. The piano repertoire does not have many well-structured pieces of good musical quality by well-known composers that bridge this gap. First published in Erfurt, Germany, in 1780, Johann Wilhelm Hässler's *Sechs leichte Sonaten fürs Clavier*, hereafter referred to as the *Six Easy Sonatas*, fills this gap perfectly. Sonatas 3, 4, and 5 are relatively difficult (early advanced), while Nos. 1, 2, and 6 are less challenging (late-intermediate). They are short, in two or three movements, and the student can learn much from them about musicality, rhythm, articulation, dynamic control, texture, form, and ornamentation.

In this era of information overload, encountering music not found in the standard piano repertoire can be challenging. One barrier for pianists wishing to expand their repertoire can be a lack of awareness of neglected works. This barrier is strengthened by the ready availability and constant marketing of the standard piano repertoire and the scarcity of information on compositions outside the standard repertoire. To date, no publication has considered Hässler's *Six Easy Sonatas* in detail from a pedagogical standpoint.

The first published discussion of the *Six Easy Sonatas* appeared in Hugo Riemann's half-page preface to his edition of them published by Litolf c. 1889. It included comments on articulation and ornamentation. In his preface to the Peters Edition from 1952, Erich Doflein

offered a page of information on dynamics, explanation of ornamentation, and a short biography of Hässler.

Literature

The following major publications on the keyboard literature have only very short references to Hässler's keyboard output, with no discussion of specific works.

- *Klaviermusik*, Walter Georgii (Atlantis, 1950)
- *Handbuch der Klavierliteratur*, Klaus Wolters (Atlantis, 1967)
- *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*, Maurice Hinson (Indiana University Press, 1987)
- *Performance Practice in Classic Piano Music*, Sandra Rosenblum (Indiana University Press, 1988)
- *Music for Piano*, F.E. Kirby (Amadeus, 1995)
- *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*, Jane Magrath (Alfred, 1995)

A thesis by Helen Siemens Walker¹ presents a biography of Hässler, an evaluation of Hässler by his contemporaries, and a survey of his keyboard works that addresses their stylistic content. A doctoral document by Edward E. Graham² contains a biography of Hässler and a discussion of performance practice that focuses on his keyboard work. Overall, Graham's research goes into greater depth than that of Walker. Walker and Graham do not include any detailed examination of the *Six Easy Sonatas* or address the usefulness of these works from a pedagogical standpoint.

¹ Walker, Helen Siemens, "Johann Wilhelm Haessler (1747-1822): Eighteenth Century Solo Keyboard Literature for Amateurs" (master's thesis, Smith College, 1968).

² Graham, Edward E., "A Study and Edition of Six Keyboard Sonatas of Johann Wilhelm Haessler (1779)" (Doctor of Music document, Indiana University, 1974).

Two sources published in the 1990s address Hässler in different ways. Ernst Stöckl writes briefly about Hässler's performing, teaching, and composing in Russia in his book *Musikgeschichte der Rußlanddeutschen*.³ The distinguished conductor and musicologist, Christopher Hogwood, produced a long article about Hässler containing remarks on the critical reception of Hässler; stylistic commentary on his keyboard works; a translation of Hässler's short autobiography; and a catalogue of Hässler's keyboard music composed before 1791.

Methodology

After the existing literature was examined thoroughly, the author studied and performed the *Six Easy Sonatas* before choosing the sonata movements thought to be most helpful for teachers and students. They were carefully analyzed from a pedagogical point of view. Pedagogical topics addressed are included phrasing, structure, ornamentation, fingering, pedaling, dynamics, articulation, and the mood and emotions suggested by the music.

The document contains five chapters and two appendices as follows:

- Introduction
- A Short Biography of Johann Wilhelm Hässler
- General Remarks on Hässler's Keyboard Output and the *Six Easy Sonatas*
- Pedagogical Examination of Selected Movements from Sonata Nos. 1, 2, and 6 from the *Six Easy Sonatas*
- Conclusion
- Appendix A: Difficulty Level of Each Movement of the *Six Easy Sonatas*
- Appendix B: Script for Lecture-Recital

³ Ernst Stöckl, *Musikgeschichte der Rußlanddeutschen* (Music history of Germans in Russia) (Dülmen: Laumann-Verlag, 1993).

The lecture-recital consisted of a script derived from this document and of performances of all of Sonata 1, the first movement of Sonata 2, and the first movement of Sonata 6.

Delimitations

The Peters edition, from which all musical examples are taken, is referenced in the document and the lecture-recital. Comparisons of the Litolff and Peters editions are mentioned when instances occur in which the two editions vary widely. A detailed comparison of the two editions is not within the scope of this document. Pertinent musical examples are placed in the text. Suggested fingerings are offered, as are alternate fingerings for those found in the Peters edition. Theoretical analysis is not within the scope of this document.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to introduce Hässler's *Six Easy Sonatas* to a wider audience of piano teachers. The *Six Easy Sonatas* provide excellent material for teachers searching for new repertoire and for students eager to learn something outside of the standard literature. These sonatas offer new repertoire options that encompass the transition from intermediate to advanced level in the classical era. The musical style in these sonatas is somewhat different in comparison to much of the standard Classical era repertoire. Exposure to Hässler's use of form, figuration, ornamentation, dynamics, and articulation will enhance the artistic range of students, hopefully leading them to an increased appreciation of the musical variety found in music from the Classic era. Additionally, Hässler's stylistic resemblance to many of C.P.E. Bach's keyboard works can give a student insight into the style of C.P.E. Bach, perhaps fostering an enthusiasm for an important composer also underplayed in our time.

CHAPTER TWO

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF JOHANN WILHELM HÄSSLER

Johann Wilhelm Hässler was born on March 29, 1747 in Erfurt, Germany. At the age of nine, Hässler started his music training under his uncle, Johann Christian Kittel (1732-1809), one of the last students of Johann Sebastian Bach, and J.S. Bach's only student to live into the nineteenth century.⁴ When Hässler was eleven his father wanted him to begin working at the family's fur and hat-making business. Johann obeyed his father, but he also continued taking organ lessons. His father did not wish to see him choose music as a profession. Consequently, his lessons had to stop and he unwillingly continued working in his father's factory. However, his passion for music found him practicing on weekends in the attic. His uncle noticed his ongoing devotion to music, and secretly gave him lessons at times.

When he was fourteen years old, after five years of study with his uncle, Hässler became an organist at the *Barfüsserkirche* in Erfurt. His father passed away in 1769 when Hässler was twenty-two. He accepted his responsibility to assist his mother with the management of his father's business, as expressed in his father's will. At the same time he continued giving lessons and practicing.

Hässler's travels brought him in contact with some of the most famous European composers. During a business trip to Hamburg in 1771 he unexpectedly made the acquaintance of Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach. After this encounter, Hässler was very much influenced by the

⁴ Christopher Hogwood, " 'The Inconstant and Original Johann Wilhelm Hässler' - His 1786 Autobiography and a Thematic Catalogue of His Keyboard Works to 1790", *De Clavicordia* III (1998): 163, n. 36.

compositional style of C.P.E. Bach. By 1788, Hässler had received praise from people as famous as Johann Forkel, the first biographer of J.S. Bach, and the great German poet Friedrich Schiller.

In 1789, Hässler participated in an organ competition in Dresden with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Hässler lost to Mozart, at this time one of Europe's greatest keyboard players. In a letter to his wife from 1789, Mozart wrote some critical comments on Hässler's playing:

His forte is the organ and the piano. Now people here think that because I come from Vienna, I am quite unacquainted with this style and mode of playing. This Hässler's chief excellence on the organ consists in his foot-work, which, since the pedals are scale wise here, is not so very wonderful. Moreover, he has done no more than commit to memory the harmony and modulations of old Sebastian Bach and is not capable of executing a fugue properly; and his playing is not thorough. Thus he is far from being an Albrechtsberger.⁵ After that we decided to go back to the Russian ambassador's, so that Hässler might hear me on the fortepiano. He played too. I consider Mlle Aurnhammer⁶ as good a player on the fortepiano as he is, so you can imagine that he has begun to sink very considerably in my estimation.⁷

Despite Mozart's negative opinion, Hässler had already been quite successful as a composer. He had published over sixty keyboard sonatas and subscribers from continental Europe, England, and even the United States had ordered his keyboard works in advance.⁸

Unlike Mozart, it appears that Haydn highly respected Hässler's playing and supported him when Hässler arrived in London in 1790. Hässler played concertos, including one by Mozart, on Johann Peter Salomon's concert series under Haydn's direction.⁹ Two years later, according

⁵ Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1736 –1809) was an Austrian musician and the teacher (briefly) of Beethoven.

⁶ Josephine von Aurnhammer (1758- 1820) was a Viennese pianist and one of Mozart's first students in Vienna.

⁷ Alfred Einstein, *Mozart: His Character, His Work* (New York, Oxford University Press 1962), 131.

⁸ Hogwood, " 'The Inconstant and Original Johann Wilhelm Hässler' ", 153.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

to a letter to his family, he must have not felt fully at home in England: “The people here are much too cold; I am going to Russia.”¹⁰

Hässler moved to St. Petersburg where he served as Russian Imperial Director of Court Music to Grand Duke Alexander in 1792 and composed a cantata for his patron’s wedding to Princess Elizabeth.¹¹ In St. Petersburg he formed a connection with the book and music publisher Johann Daniel Gerstenburg and his colleague B. T. Breitkopf¹² who had started a business there in 1790 as *Gerstenburg et Comp.*¹³

The next year Hässler moved to Moscow and made his debut there. He composed several works honoring members of the Russian nobility. Among them was a cantata using a German text, *Katharina, die Mutter ihres Volkes* (Catherine, the mother of her people) for soloists and choir, for the thirtieth anniversary of the coronation of Catherine the Great, empress of Russia. According to Ernst Strökl, Hässler wrote about fifty works in Russia, including the 360 *Preludien in allen Tonarten* (360 Preludes in All Keys) in 1817.¹⁴ Pianist Dimitry Feofanov has recorded some of these preludes, which are available on YouTube.

According to Hogwood “...he continued to give concerts until three months before his death...”.¹⁵ Hässler died in Moscow on March 27, 1822, following a long career as beloved composer, performer, and piano teacher. After his death, a monument in his honor was erected by one of his students in Moscow.

¹⁰ Edward E Graham, “A Study and Edition of Six Keyboard Sonatas of Johann Wilhelm Hässler (1779)” (DMA diss., Indiana University, 1974), 24. Here Graham quotes a letter cited by Aloys Moiser in his *Annales de la Musique et des Musiciens en Russie au XVIII Siecle* (Geneva: Mont-Blanc, 1950), 596, 660.

¹¹ Hogwood, “ ‘The Inconstant and Original Johann Wilhelm Hässler’ ”, 154.

¹² Bernhard Theodor Breitkopf (1749-1820), a son of the Leipzig publisher Bernhard Christoph Breitkopf who was the founder of the publishing house Breitkopf & Härtel.

¹³ Hogwood, “ ‘The Inconstant and Original Johann Wilhelm Hässler’ ”, 154.

¹⁴ Ernst Strökl, *Musikgeschichte der Rußlanddeutschen* (Music history of Germans in Russia) (Dülmen: Laumann-Verlag, 1993), 48.

¹⁵ Hogwood, “ ‘The Inconstant and Original Johann Wilhelm Hässler’ ”, 154.

CHAPTER THREE

GENERAL REMARKS ON HÄSSLER'S KEYBOARD OUTPUT

AND THE *SIX EASY SONATAS*

No authoritative listing of Hässler's complete works has been assembled. However, Christopher Hogwood made a thematic listing of Hässler's keyboard compositions written through 1790, the year of his departure from Erfurt.¹⁶ Titles found in Hogwood's list include: sonata; fantasia; sinfonia; rondo; divertimento; solo (consisting of multiple movements); and dance types that include polonaise, minuet, polacca, angloise, and engloise. F. E. Kirby lists these additional titles used by Hässler: caprice, character piece, etude, prelude, variation, and waltz.¹⁷

Hogwood compared Hässler's keyboard writing with that of Haydn and Mozart:

Hässler stretches the keyboard (and keyboard notation) further than either Haydn or Mozart, indicating small variants in tempo and dynamic within a short passage, double phrasing (several short slurs within a long slur), articulation and expression on single notes (Bebung and Tragen) and precise gradations of dynamics within a crescendo;¹⁸

¹⁶ Hogwood, "The Inconstant and Original Johann Wilhelm Hässler", 180-219.

¹⁷ F. E. Kirby, *Music for Piano: A Short History* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1997), 139.

¹⁸ Hogwood, "The Inconstant and Original Johann Wilhelm Hässler", 158.

He also commented on the possibility of playing Hässler's works on both the clavichord and the piano:

This very easy transfer of his music from clavichord to piano illuminates two important principles. Firstly, it draws attention to the degree to which Hässler stretched the technical demands that could be placed on the clavichord (his frequent use of octaves, for instance, both in melody and bass, and lines that touch the extremes of the compass – like W. F. Bach, he calls for a top F[#]).¹⁹

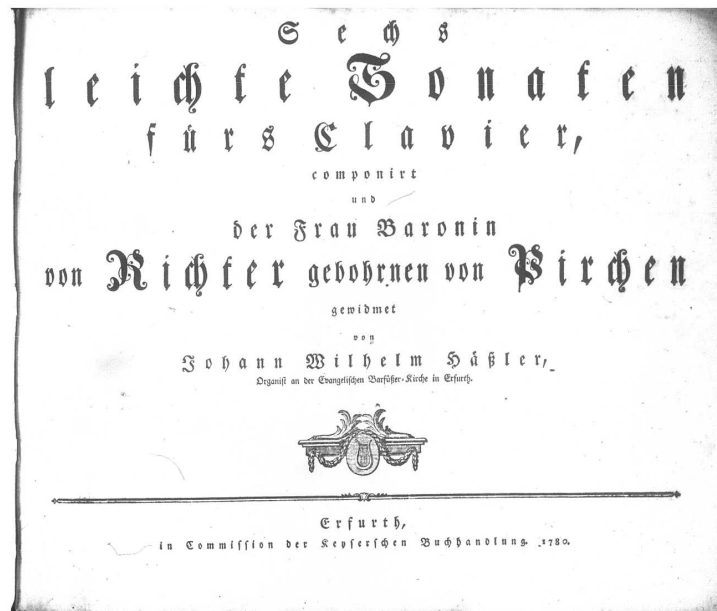


Figure 1: Cover of the first edition (1780) of Hässler's *Six Easy Sonatas*

The *Six Easy Sonatas* were published in Erfurt by the Keyser bookstore in 1780. The set was written for and dedicated to Baroness von Richter née von Pirchen. The publication had 264 advance subscribers in Germany.

¹⁹ Ibid., 160.

The first three sonatas are relatively intermediate in their difficulty level, but the remaining three are closer to an advanced level. In this collection a great variety of styles, from the galant to the intensely dramatic, is present. The *Six Easy Sonatas* fills the challenging transitional gap from intermediate to early advanced level. They offer guidance to students in this important style as they progress toward the significant sonatas of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.

The five sonata movements examined in chapter four were chosen to offer wide musical variety at the intermediate to early advanced levels. Sonata 1 was chosen because it is the shortest of the sonatas in the set and is a complete sonata. The first movements of Sonatas 2 and 6 were selected for their stylistic differences compared to Sonata 1. A list of all seventeen movements from the *Six Easy Sonatas* arranged by difficulty level, can be found in appendix A.

CHAPTER FOUR

PEDAGOGICAL EXAMINATION OF SELECTED MOVEMENTS FROM SONATA NOS. 1, 2, AND 6 FROM THE *SIX EASY SONATAS*

Sonata No.1

First Movement

The first movement tempo marking, *Un poco andante*, which means “a little slow,” is significant. The words *un poco* are probably added to make a contrast with the second movement’s tempo marking of *Adagio*, which means “very slow.” To make the contrast in tempo between the first and second movements the first movement should not start too slow. Rather, the performer should choose a speed at which the thirty-second-note passages in mm. 4, 7, and 31 flow comfortably. (See Example 1.) A metronome mark between 88 and 96 to the eighth note is suggested.



Example 1: Sonata 1, movement 1, m. 6-7

In the *Six Easy Sonatas*, Hässler often uses phrase lengths constructed with non-standard numbers of measures, such as three, five, six, and seven measures. Perhaps using nontraditional phrase lengths might have been seen as a bold approach in his late eighteenth-century context. The phrase structure of the A section of this movement (mm. 1-16) may be analyzed in more than one way. One possibility is three phrases whose lengths are 4 + 6 + 6 measures. Another possibility is 4 + 4 + 2 + 2 + 4.

The second phrase sounds like it has a sense of closure at m. 8, on the second eighth note. However, the D on beat two can be heard as a bridge to mm. 9-10, extending the phrase to six measures rather than the standard four-measure phrase length.

In the first phrase, it can be helpful for students to make a skeleton of the phrase structure using three main notes: G (the downbeat of m. 1); E (m. 2, marked *tenuto*), and D (the last note of the phrase, m. 4). Those three main notes form the outline of the first phrase. (See Example 2.)



Example 2: Sonata 1, movement 1, mm. 1-4

In this movement, the slurred melodic second, the *appoggiatura* and its resolution, is the most frequently used figure. Slurred melodic seconds need careful attention from the performer. The first note requires a slightly heavier touch using arm weight, and the second note is played with a lighter touch. This particular playing motion, the well-known down-up (often called drop-

roll) wrist movement will produce a subtle *rubato* and a slight separation between the repeated pitches.

The slurred melodic seconds sometimes appear in one hand as a duet in parallel thirds or parallel sixths. Whenever possible, I recommend using finger changes. Everyone can play the parallel thirds with finger changes, but those who have small hands cannot play the parallel sixths comfortably. They may want to use this fingering in mm. 4, 15-16, and 27-28: 5-1, 4-1. (See Example 2, p. 12, Example 3, and Example 4, p. 14.)

The first movement starts with an accompanied solo melody line in mm. 1-2 that changes to harmonic thirds in mm. 2-3 and then to harmonic sixths in m. 3. (See Example 2, p. 12.) The opening phrase is developed throughout the B section (mm. 17-32). In mm. 25-28, the harmonic intervals expand from thirds to sixths as they approach a climax. An unexpected decrease in dynamics occurs at the end of m. 27, just before the climax. At the summit of the climax at the end of m. 28, the melody dramatically returns as a *forte* solo line.



Example 3: Sonata 1, movement 1, mm. 22-32

There are some pitch disagreements in the three published editions of this sonata. From the last sixteenth note of m. 10 to the sixth sixteenth note in m. 11, the original edition (Keyser,

1780) and the Peters Edition (edited by Erich Doflein, 1952) print an octave unison passage, one voice in each hand. (See Example 4.) The Litolff Edition (edited by Hugo Riemann, c. 1889) prints the left hand a sixth below the right hand's melody. I find the parallel sixths more interesting, and parallel sixths are stylistically consistent with the rest of the movement in which all sixteenth notes in two voices proceed either in thirds or sixths. Performers could try out both versions and then make a choice.



Example 4: Sonata 1, movement 1, mm. 6-16

Second Movement

Several characteristics similar to those found in many of C.P.E. Bach's works, usually referred to as *Empfindsamer Stil* (Sensitive Style), are present in this movement: improvisational style figures that often interrupt the musical flow; frequent and sometimes sudden dynamic changes; thick textures; rhythmic variety; and a range of tone color.

In contrast to the first and third movements, this movement is through-composed, giving the listener the impression of an improvisation. However, Hässler planned his structure carefully. For instance, from mm. 16-22 the bass line moves as follows: A^b – G – D (F is included in the harmony)- E^b – D – C –B^b – A – G – F[#]. This long, mostly stepwise, bass line supports chordal, three-part chorale, and polyphonic writing within the span of seven measures, providing a fine example of Hässler disguising his organizational skill when writing in an improvisational style. (See Example 5.)



Example 5: Sonata 1, movement 2, mm. 15-24

The dynamic markings in this movement are very detailed compared to the first and third movements. Frequently, the dynamic changes from measure to measure. In m. 2 the right hand and left hand have different dynamics. In m. 13 the rarely seen dynamic marking *pf* (*poco forte*)

means the dynamic gradually increases. Measure 23 contains three different dynamic markings. On the downbeat of m. 27 an explosive event occurs when the thickest chord (eight notes) in the sonata is played *ff*, the only request for this volume level in the entire sonata. (See Example 6.)



Example 6: Sonata 1, movement 2, mm. 25-28

Variety of dynamics is not the only expressive element that stands out in this movement. Articulation is also significant. In the Peters edition, a wedge sign is consistently used in all six sonatas to indicate *staccato*. The wedge sign does not necessarily mean that an extremely short *staccato* touch should be used. The length and quality of *staccato* notes will depend upon the musical context. One such situation occurs in m. 28. (See Example 6.) The last note of this movement has a *staccato* mark played while the bass is sustained. The right hand strikes the last note sharply within a *piano* dynamic. In this case, if played precisely as notated, pedaling also can be a challenge. I recommend releasing the pedal to observe the sixty-fourth-note rest to produce clear articulation with no hint of blurring.

In m. 13, beat one, upper staff, the rhythmic notation is unclear. Inserting a thirty-second rest after the F in the alto voice clarifies this situation.

In m. 2, a dotted line and a slur are notated above the D in the upper staff. This notation indicates a *Bebung*, an effect achieved by depressing a key(s) and shaking the hand either

vertically or horizontally to produce a vibrato on the note(s). This effect was possible on the clavichord but cannot be produced on the modern piano.

Some rhythms in this movement look more difficult in print than they sound, which can intimidate some students. I recommend finding the foundation of the rhythm in the less active bass line to help with counting in mm. 6-7, 22-23. (See Example 5, p. 15.) Tapping can be a good learning approach. The teacher could tap the more complicated part and the student the easier part.

Here is another approach to tapping the rhythm. In mm. 21-22 (see Example 5, p. 15), without using the score, the teacher could tap the rhythm and the student could imitate. After doing this successfully, teacher and student could return to the score and relate what was just learned by imitation to the printed musical notation.

Third Movement

A tempo must be chosen that allows time for a clean execution of the mordant on the first note of the movement. I suggest 160 to 168 to the eighth note. In this tempo, the movement's two moments of Haydnesque humor – the prolongation of the part in the left hand in m. 12 (see Example 7, p. 18) and the surprise thirty-second notes in the right hand in m. 42 – are not rushed or not too slow.



Example 7: Sonata 1, movement 3, mm. 1-16

Only one passage, mm. 13-14, could be puzzling in terms of articulation. At the end of this scale passage, a slur is placed over the last five notes. The slur seems to imply a more connected touch for these five notes than the notes preceding them. However, it is difficult to precisely define the “correct” way to play scale passages notated without slurs in Classical era performance practice. Two options are available: play the whole passage *legato* or play the unslurred notes with a lighter touch but do not attempt a completely *staccato* touch. (See Example 7.) The sixteenth-note passagework marked *dolce* (mm. 25-32) invites a *legato* touch. (See Example 8, p. 18.)

The passage in mm. 5-14 contains a whole package of technique exercises. Measures 5-6 require two different techniques; the first half is a broken G-major chord and the last half is a skipping G-major chord that requires wrist rotation. (See Example 7.) In mm. 13-14, the scale passage combines part of a D-major scale and part of a chromatic scale. (See Example 7.)

Three different textures occur in the developmental B section (mm. 17-32). Measures 17-20 employ some chord technique in a hemiola pattern; two groups of the usual three beat groupings are replaced by three groups of two beats, giving the effect of a shift between triple

and duple meter. This is a good opportunity for the student to experience hemiola, although not every student will be ready to understand the intellectual concept. (See Example 8.)



Example 8: Sonata 1, movement 3, mm. 17-28

In the next phrase (mm. 21-24), the left hand presents a diminution of the melodic line found in both hands in mm. 17-20. It also includes hocket technique, the alternation of single notes between the hands. A hocket passage, always fun to play, is one of the many joyful elements of this movement. (See Example 8.) On the last beat of m. 24 Hässler writes *dolce*, introducing a sudden change of mood in a typical melody-accompaniment galant texture. (See Example 8.)

In this movement, Hässler again provides interesting usage of dynamic markings. However, the editor of the Peters edition inserted two dynamic markings not found in the 1780 Keyser edition. At the opening of the movement, *mf* is indicated and placed in parentheses to show that it is an editorial suggestion. A *p* dynamic marking appears in the last two measures of the movement. Since this is not in the original edition, it should also have been placed in parentheses in my opinion.

I find this movement is the easiest in this sonata, and could be assigned separately to younger intermediate students. Often such students can relate better to a new piece if a storyline is created for the composition. I will offer one possible story.

Child A is dancing happily in Section A (mm. 1-16) and spins around in mm. 5-6 at the arpeggiated pattern. At the pickup note to mm. 13-14, child A steps back to get ready to gradually run faster, leading to a big jump from the end of m. 14 to a graceful landing on the downbeat of m. 15 for the final cadence in mm. 15-16. (See Example 7, p. 18.)

Child B liked Child A's dancing, and responds with a magic show, trying to impress Child A. The magic show starts at the B section (mm. 17-32). A bird flies out from behind a black cloth with wings flapping represented by the ascending two-note groups. Colorful paper flowers fall down from the magic cloth where sixteenth notes alternate between the hands. (See Example 8, p. 19.) Finally, the two children dance delightfully together at the *dolce* passage (mm. 25-32). (See Example 8, p. 19.)

The A' section (mm. 33-48) is almost identical to the A section. Child A starts over, dancing with more enthusiasm and more confidence at a *forte* dynamic and tries a challenging high jump at m. 43 during the *fortissimo* thirty-second-note flourish. Each child now has a good impression of the other and they will become good friends.

Sonata No. 2

First Movement

The first movement of Sonata No. 2 has an unusual tempo marking, as did Sonata No. 1. The performance indication for the first movement, *Tempo di Minuetto*, was rarely used for the

first movement of a sonata or a sonatina. A minuet, a dance in triple meter, usually appears as a second or third movement. Hässler decided to place the dance movement as the opening movement. Because the speed of the movement is *Tempo di Minuetto*, it must sound like a real dance in three four. The tempo should not be too fast because the music should be danceable. Sandra Rosenblum provides the following comments on the speed of Classic era minuets:

Two types of minuets existed during the eighteenth century and through the Classic era. The type more usual in Classic music, a fast piece although often headed *Allegretto*, moves with one pulse per measure: the more moderate minuet, frequently headed *Menuetto*, *Moderato* or *Tempo di Menuetto*, moves with three beats per measure and sometimes contains subdivisions of eighth-note triplets and sixteenth notes.²⁰

Generally speaking, the minuet rhythm is stressed on the downbeat. However, this is not the case in some sections of this movement. In mm. 2 and 4, the half notes on the second beats have the abbreviation *ten.* placed above them, which means they are to be played with *rubato* in an emphasized manner. The majority of the second beats in the A section have *tenuto* markings or are long notes. They all must be played with elegance to charm the audience. It is interesting to note that the bar lines of mm. 1-13 in section A could be relocated one beat to the right, changing the original second beats to downbeats. (See Example 9, p. 22.)

²⁰ Sandra P. Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 338.



Example 9: Sonata 2, movement 1, mm. 1-11

For my graduate assistantship assignment, I have accompanied ballet classes and consequently observed many dancers. In my opinion, if this movement were to be danced, the dancers would make a movement that looks like a curtsy, and making this motion naturally takes a bit more time. On the second beats the *tenuto* markings are possibly there to give the dancers enough time to execute the motion gracefully.

The approach to the *tenuto* notes on the second beats is also important. The notes with the wedge sign at the end of the slur in m. 2 need to be executed with care. (See Example 9.) In my opinion, they must be separated from the next beat, but must not sound too clipped. To produce this result, the performer must control the length of the note with an ascending wrist motion.

At several places, short bridges, almost always in dotted rhythm, are used to create continuity from phrase to phrase (mm. 6, 8, 28, 34, 42 and 77). The dotted rhythm bridge in mm. 62-63 is a surprise compositional move. After the dotted rhythm bridge asserts its personality, m. 64 presents an even more surprising rhythm: scotch snaps, a syncopated rhythm in which a short, accented note is followed by a longer one. (See Example 10, p. 23.)



Example 10: Sonata 2, movement 1, mm. 62-64

A performance practice issue relating to rhythm arises in m. 52. The dotted rhythm of the left hand part should be played with the third note of each triplet in the right hand part. Sandra Rosenblum discussed this baroque era notation:

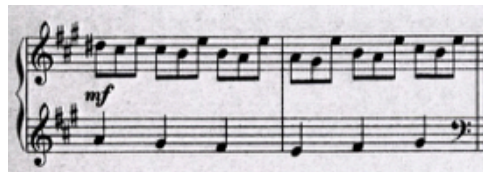
Emmanuel Bach's example illustrates the two kinds of binary notation commonly used in the Baroque and early Classic periods to express a form of compound ternary notation that did not yet exist: the quarter- and eighth-note triplet, or 2:1 relationship. The resulting combination of duple and triple notation was sometimes called "mixed meters." In performance, the dotted patterns were compressed and softened, and equal notes were expanded and made unequal. Both adjustments assimilated to the ternary rhythm, creating the sound of a quarter- and eighth-note triplet.²¹

Phrase structure is also interesting in this movement. Starting in m. 43, a four-measure sequence occurs twice but is interrupted at mm. 51 with a three-measure phrase. Here is the phrase structure of the B section: 6+4+4+4+4+3+4. In my opinion, the three-measure phrase structure does not throw off the music's balance but fits well with the neighboring phrases.

The continuous triplet figure that begins in m. 21 always includes an E as the last note of the triplet. To avoid a monotonous effect, practice playing the E as soft as possible. (See Example 11, p. 24.)

²¹ Ibid., 293-294.

The rhythmic beaming starting in m. 21 does not correspond to the most natural physical grouping in this passage. (See Example 11.) To achieve technical ease, I suggest reorganizing in groups of three notes beginning with the repeated E naturals. This regrouping requires a wrist movement from right to left, producing an elegant sound for the passage.



Example 11: Sonata 2, movement 1, mm. 21-22

Sonata No. 6

First Movement

The opening of the first movement doesn't really sound like the beginning of a movement. It sounds more like it started in the middle of a phrase because a ii_6 chord occurs on the downbeat of the first phrase. This is the only time in the *Six Easy Sonatas* this happens. Fourteen out of seventeen movements start on a tonic chord, and two begin on a dominant chord.

The key of this movement is C major, and in mm. 13-18 the passage is trapped on the dominant seventh (G major), reminding me of a squirrel on a treadmill constantly running faster and faster. The squirrel gets tired, and finally collapses in the *adagio* in m. 18. (See Example 12, p. 25.)

flow smoothly and not too slowly. The main technical challenges include broken chord passages in mm. 8-9 (see Example 12, p. 25), m. 11 (see Example 12, p. 25), mm. 41-46, and m. 79 (see Example 13, p. 27), and sustaining the pedal point on G while playing parallel harmonic thirds in mm. 13-16 (see Example 12, p. 25) and the similar passages in mm. 56-63. Like the first movement of Sonata No. 2, this is also a good opportunity for mastering a large range of rhythmic values from quarter notes to thirty-second notes.

The following suggestions should help students overcome the challenges in the left hand in mm. 13-16 (see Example 12, p. 25), a section in which tension can build up in the left hand. I recommend repeating each harmonic third three times, then two times, then as written while sustaining the bass note. The thirds need to be played with a free wrist supported on a firm and flexible fifth finger.

Up to this point, none of the movements examined so far have contained passagework for the left hand. This movement offers five-finger and scale patterns in the left hand that play solo roles in mm. 19-25 (see Example 12, p. 25) and 71-75.

This movement has unpredictable and whimsical events, a welcome trait often found in the *Six Easy Sonatas*. The phrase structure of mm. 19-33 is divided 2+2+2+3+2+4. Once again Hässler is grabbing our attention with an odd-numbered phrase length. Another surprising event occurs on the downbeat of m. 76. The music suddenly stops on a diminished chord without any resolution, and then a grand pause follows at mm. 76-77. The silence is broken by a cadenza-like three-measure passage in mm. 78-80 that resolves in m. 81 on the tonic chord. (See Example 13, p. 27.)



Example 13: Sonata 6, movement 1, mm. 76-82

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In his lifetime, Hässler had a solid reputation as a composer, performer, and teacher in several European countries. He came in contact with famous composers such as Mozart, Haydn, and C.P.E Bach. His compositions often sold many advanced copies. The last stage of his career, working in Russia, found him employed by members of the Russian nobility, a sign of success for a professional musician.

After a long period of apparent neglect, a publication of his *Six Easy Sonatas* by Litolff appeared in Germany around 1889. This collection was reprinted several times and remains currently available. Nonetheless, his name and his works are almost unknown in our era. Very few sources of information on Hässler's life and music exist. In 1997 Christopher Hogwood, the internationally known performer and musicologist, published a long article on Hässler's life and keyboard music composed before 1791. Edward Graham's study from 1979 was the first in-depth examination of a set of keyboard pieces by Johann Wilhelm Hässler. My document, focusing on The Six Easy Sonatas, is the second.

Hässler's keyboard works are relevant for piano teachers and students in the twenty-first century. His *Six Easy Sonatas* fills the transitional gap from intermediate to early advanced level in the Classic style and are extremely helpful for students who wish to advance from the sonatinas of Clementi and Kuhlau to the more advanced level of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven sonatas. All five of the movements examined in chapter four meet this goal, providing students

with music of good quality. They feature a variety of compositional styles, imaginative use of detailed dynamic markings, nontraditional phrase lengths, an assortment of touch types and articulations, intricate rhythms, and improvisational and unpredictable musical events. Technical challenges found in these movements include parallel thirds and sixths, different types of ornaments, arpeggios, scales and broken chords.

Hässler's *Six Easy Sonatas* offer first-rate musical and pedagogical content for student development. It is my intention that this document will encourage teachers to investigate this collection and to teach these sonatas. As noted earlier, Hässler's keyboard output is very large and the vast majority of it remains unexplored. Further research on this body of work must follow this study because other good pedagogical compositions by Hässler deserve to be rediscovered and published in modern editions.

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APPENDIX A

DIFFICULTY LEVEL OF EACH MOVEMENT OF THE *SIX EASY SONATAS*

This appendix assigns a level of difficulty to each movement of Hässler's *Six Easy Sonatas*. Difficulty levels six through nine as found on page xi in Jane Magrath's *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* (Alfred, 1995) are used for this purpose and are given below. (Magrath uses a scale of one through ten, although her ten levels do not encompass the advanced concert repertoire.)

Level 6: Clementi Sonatinas, Op. 36; Burgmüller 25 Progressive Pieces, Op. 100

Level 7: Kuhlau and Diabelli Sonatinas; Bach easier *Two-Part Invention*; Bach *Little Preludes*; Dello Joio *Lyric Pieces* for the Young

Level 8: Moderately difficult Bach *Two-Part Inventions*; Beethoven easier variations sets; Field Nocturnes; Schumann *Album Leaves*, Op. 124, Schubert Waltzes; Turina *Miniatures*

Level 9: Easier Bach *Three-Part Inventions*; easiest Haydn Sonata movements; easiest Mendelssohn *Songs Without Words*; easiest Chopin Mazurkas

A list of all movements of Hässler's *Six Easy Sonatas* ranked by difficulty according to Magrath's levels is given below:

Level 6

Sonata 1, movement 3

Level 7

Sonata 1, movement 1
Sonata 2 movement 1
Sonata 2, movement 3
Sonata 5, movement 1
Sonata 6, movement 2

Level 8

Sonata 2, movement 2
Sonata 3, movement 1
Sonata 3, movement 3
Sonata 4, movement 1

Level 9

Sonata 1, movement 2
Sonata 3, movement 2
Sonata 4, movement 2
Sonata 4, movement 3
Sonata 5, movement 2
Sonata 5, movement 3
Sonata 6, movement 1

APPENDIX B

LECTURE-RECITAL SCRIPT

Slide 1 (Portrait of Johann Wilhelm Hässler)

Good afternoon. Thank you for coming to my lecture-recital today. I would like to talk about Johann Wilhelm Hässler. Has anyone heard his name or played Johann Wilhelm Hässler's music? If not, I would like to introduce Johann Wilhelm Hässler.

Slide 2 (Bullet point biography of Hässler, part 1)

Johann Wilhelm Hässler was born on March 29, 1747 in Erfurt, Germany. At the age of nine, Hässler started his music training under his uncle, Johann Christian Kittel, one of the last students of Johann Sebastian Bach. When Hässler was eleven, his father wanted him to begin working at his father's fur and hat-making business. Johann obeyed his father, but also continued taking organ lessons. His father didn't wish to see him become a musician. So, his lessons had to stop and he unwillingly worked in his father's factory. However, his passion for music found him practicing on weekends in the attic. His uncle noticed his continuing devotion to music, and secretly gave him lessons at times.

When he was fourteen years old, after five years of study with his uncle, Hässler became an organist at the *Barfüsserkirche* in Erfurt.

Slide 3 (Photo of *Barfüsserkirche* in Erfurt taken after World War II)

This is a picture of the *Barfüsserkirche* in Erfurt, which was built mainly in the 14th century and as you can see the church was partially destroyed by WWII bombs. The meaning of *Barfüsserkirche* is “Barefoot (Bare feet) church”

Slide 4 (Bullet point biography of Hässler, part 2)

His father passed away in 1769 when Hässler was twenty-two. He accepted his responsibility to help out his mother with the management of his father’s business, as his father had wished. At the same time, he continued giving lessons and practicing.

Hässler’s business trips allowed him to get acquainted with some of the most famous European composers. In 1771, he unexpectedly had an opportunity to meet Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach in Hamburg. After this encounter, Hässler was very much influenced by the compositional style of C. P. E. Bach. In 1789, Hässler participated in an organ competition in Dresden with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Unfortunately, Hässler lost to Mozart, at this time one of Europe’s greatest keyboard players. In a letter to his wife from 1789, Mozart wrote some critical comments on Hässler’s playing. I will quote a part of the letter: “...he has done no more than commit to memory the harmony and modulations of old Sebastian Bach and is not capable of executing a fugue properly; and his playing is not thorough”.

Unlike Mozart, it appears that Haydn highly respected Hässler’s playing and helped him out when Hässler arrived in London in 1790. Two years later, according to a letter to his family, he must have felt not fully at home in England: “The people here are much too cold; I am going to Russia.” And then he moved to St. Petersburg where he served as Russian Imperial *Hofkapellmeister*, director of court music, to Grand Duke Alexander in 1793 and composed a cantata for his patron’s wedding to Princess Elizabeth. The next year he moved to Moscow and made his debut there. He died there on March 27, 1822, following a long career as composer,

performer and piano teacher. After his death, a monument was erected by one of his students in his honor in Moscow.

Slide 5 (Bullet point summary of the *Six Easy Sonatas*)

The *Six Easy Sonatas* were composed in 1780. The first three sonatas are relatively intermediate in their difficulty level, but the remaining three are closer to an advanced level. In this collection a great variety of styles, from the galant to the intensely dramatic, is present. As I mentioned earlier, The *Six Easy Sonatas* fills the challenging transitional gap from intermediate to early advanced level. They offer guidance to students in this important style as they progress toward the significant sonatas of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Sonata No. 1, the shortest of the set, will now be discussed in some detail.

Slide 6 (Sonata no. 1, movement 1)

I will play the first movement, which is a very short movement. (Play the first movement.)

Slide 7 (Sonata no. 1, movement 1: phrase lengths; *tenuto* markings; parallel thirds and sixths; pitch disagreements)

The first movement tempo marking, *Un poco Andante*, which means “a little slow”, is significant. Has anyone ever seen that tempo marking before? The words *un poco* are probably added to make a contrast with the second movement’s tempo marking of *Adagio*, which means “very slow.” To make the contrast in tempo between the first and second movements, the first movement may not start too slow. The performer should choose a speed at which the thirty-second-note passages in mm. 4, 7, and 31 flow comfortably. I suggest a speed between 88 and 96 to the eighth note.

In the *Six Easy Sonatas*, Hässler often uses phrase lengths constructed with non-standard numbers of measures, such as three, five, six, and seven measures. I find this very interesting.

Perhaps using untraditional phrase lengths must have been seen as a bold approach in his late eighteenth-century context. The phrase structure of the A section of this movement (mm. 1-16) may be analyzed in more than one way. One possibility is three phrases whose lengths are four, six, and six measures. Another possibility is four, four, two, two, and four.

To me, it sounds like the second phrase has a sense of closure at m. 8, second eighth note. However, the D on beat two can be heard as a bridge to mm. 9-10, extending the phrase to six measures rather than the standard four-measure phrase length. (Demonstrate mm. 7-10.)

In the first phrase, it can be helpful for students to make a skeleton of the phrase structure using three main notes: G (the downbeat of m. 1); E (m. 2, marked *tenuto*), and D (the last note of the phrase, m. 4). Those three main notes form the outline of the first phrase.

In this movement, the slurred melodic second is the most frequently used figure. I'd like to talk about how to play the slurred melodic second. The first note requires a slightly heavier touch using arm weight and the second note is played with a lighter touch. This particular playing motion, the well-known down-up, often called drop-roll, wrist movement, will produce a subtle *rubato* and a slight separation between the repeated pitches.

The slurred melodic seconds sometimes appear in one hand as a duet in parallel thirds or parallel sixths. Whenever possible, I recommend using finger changes when moving from the second third of the first group to the first third of the new group. Everyone can play the parallel thirds with finger changes, but those who have small hands cannot play the parallel sixths comfortably. They may want to use this fingering in mm. 4, 15-16, and 27-28: 5-1, 4-1.

The first movement starts with an accompanied solo melody line in mm. 1-2 that changes to harmonic thirds in mm. 2-3 and then to harmonic sixths in m. 3. The opening phrase is developed throughout the B section (mm. 17-32). In mm. 25-28 the harmonic intervals expand

from thirds to sixths as they approach a climax. An unexpected decrease in dynamics occurs at the end of m. 27 just before the climax. At the summit of the climax at the end of m. 28 the melody dramatically returns as a *forte* solo line.

There are some pitch disagreements in the three published editions of this sonata. From the last sixteenth note of m. 10 to the left hand in m. 11 the original edition (Keyser, 1780) and the Peters Edition (edited by Erich Doflein, 1952) print an octave unison passage. The Litolf Edition (edited by Hugo Riemann, c. 1889) prints the left hand a sixth below the right hand's melody. I find the parallel sixths more interesting, and sixths are stylistically consistent with the rest of the movement in which all sixteenth notes in two voices proceed either in thirds or sixths. Nonetheless, it probably is best to try out both versions and then make your choice. I will now play both versions. (Demonstrate both versions.)

Slide 8 (Sonata no. 1, movement 2)

I will now play the second movement of Sonata No. 1. (Play the second movement)

Slide 9 (Sonata no. 1, movement 2: *Bebung*; rhythmic notation error; dynamics; wedge signs)

As you may have noticed, several characteristics similar to those found in many of C.P.E. Bach's works are present in this movement: improvisational style figures that often interrupt the musical flow; frequent and sometimes sudden dynamic changes; thick textures; and rhythmic variety.

In contrast to the first and third movements, this movement is through-composed, giving the listener the impression of an improvisation. However, Hüssler planned his structure carefully.

Slide 10 (Sonata no. 1, movement 2: bass line in mm. 16-22)

For instance, from mm. 16-22 the bass line moves as follows; A^b – G – D (an F is included in the harmony) - E^b – D – C – B^b – A – G – F[#]. This long, mostly stepwise, bass line supports chordal,

three-part chorale, and polyphonic writing within the span of seven measures, providing a fine example of Hüssler disguising his organizational compositional skill when writing in an improvisational style.

Back to Slide 9 (See page 36)

As you can also observe, the dynamic markings in this movement are very detailed compared to the first and third movement. Frequently, the dynamic changes from measure to measure. In m. 2 the right hand and left hand have different dynamics. In m. 13 the *pf* means the dynamic gradually increases. Measure 23 contains three different dynamic markings. On the downbeat of m. 27, an explosive event occurs when the thickest chord (eight notes) in the sonata is played *ff*, the only request for this volume level in the entire sonata.

This movement is striking not only because of the variety of dynamics, but also because of the expressive elements that stand out. Articulation is also significant. In the Peters edition, a wedge sign is consistently used in all six sonatas to indicate *staccato*. This does not mean that the wedge sign indicates an extremely short *staccato*. The length and quality of *staccato* notes will depend upon the musical context. One such situation occurs in m. 28. The last note of this movement has a *staccato* mark played while the bass is sustained. The right hand strikes the last note sharply within a *piano* dynamic. The question of how short and sharp can be a topic for a fun discussion between teacher and pupil. In this case, if played precisely as notated, pedaling also can be a challenge. I recommend releasing the pedal to observe the sixty-fourth-note rest in order to produce clear articulation with no hint of blurring. (Demonstrate m. 28.)

In m. 13, beat one, upper staff, the rhythmic notation is unclear. Inserting a thirty-second rest after the F in the alto voice clarifies this situation.

Lastly, in m. 2, a dotted line and a slur are notated above the D in the upper staff. This notation indicates a *Bebung*, an effect achieved by depressing a key(s) and shaking the hand either vertically or laterally to produce a vibrato on the note(s). This effect was possible on the clavichord but cannot be produced on the modern piano.

Slide 11 (Sonata no. 1, movement 3)

Let's move on to the third movement of sonata No. 1.

(Play the third movement)

Slide 12 (Sonata no. 1, movement 3: motivic diminution; dynamics)

A tempo must be chosen that allows time for a clean completing of the mordant on the first note of the movement. I suggest 160 to 168 to the eighth note. In this tempo, the movement's two moments of Haydnesque humor - the prolongation of the part in the left hand in m. 12 and the surprise thirty-second notes in the right hand in m. 42 – are not rushed or not too slow. (Demonstrate mm. 12 and 42.)

Only one passage, mm. 13-14, could be puzzling in terms of articulation. At the end of this scale passage, a slur is placed over the last five notes. The slur seems to imply a more connected touch for these five notes than the notes preceding them. However, it is difficult to precisely define the “correct” way to play scale passages notated without slurs in classical era performance practice. Two options are available: play the whole passage *legato* or play the unslurred notes with a lighter touch but do not attempt a completely *staccato* touch. The sixteenth-note passagework marked *dolce* (mm. 25-32) invites a *legato* touch.

The passage in mm. 5-6 requires two different techniques; the first half is a broken G-major chord and the last half is a skipping G-major chord that requires wrist rotation. In mm. 13-14, the scale passage combines part of a D-major scale and part of a chromatic scale. The

arpeggiated pattern and the scale-like passage offer two ways to improve the student's technique. This passage is a whole package of technique exercises.

Three different textures occur in the developmental B section (mm. 17-32). Mm. 17-20 employ some chord technique in a hemiola pattern; two groups of three beats are replaced by three groups of two beats, giving the effect of a shift between triple and duple meter. This is a good opportunity for the student to learn about hemiola.

The next phrase (mm. 21-24) presents a diminution of the melodic line found in mm. 17-20. It also includes hocket technique, the alternation of single notes between the hands. A hocket passage, always fun to play, is one of the many joyful elements of this movement. On the last beat of m. 24 Hässler writes *dolce*, introducing a sudden change of mood in a typical melody-accompaniment galant texture.

In this movement, Hässler again provides interesting usage of dynamic markings. However, the editor of the Peters edition inserted two dynamic markings not found in the 1780 edition. At the opening of the movement, *mf* is indicated and placed in parentheses to show that it is an editorial suggestion. A *p* dynamic marking appears in the last two measures of the movement. Since this is not in the original edition, it should also have been placed in parentheses in my opinion.

I find this movement is the easiest in this sonata, and could be assigned separately to younger intermediate students. Often such students can relate better to a new piece if a storyline is created for the composition. I will offer one possible story.

Child A is dancing happily in Section A (mm. 1-16) and spins around in mm. 5-6 at the arpeggiated pattern. At the pickup note to mm. 13-14, Child A steps back to get ready to

gradually run faster, leading to a big jump from the end of m. 14 to a graceful landing on the downbeat of m. 15 for the final cadence in mm. 15-16.

Child B liked child A's dancing, and responds with a magic show, trying to impress Child A. The magic show starts at the B section (mm. 17-32). A bird flies out from behind a black cloth with wings flapping (mm. 17-20, see Example 5, p. 16) represented by the ascending two-note groups. Colorful paper flowers fall down from the magic cloth (mm. 21-24, see Example 5, p. 16) where sixteenth notes alternate between the hands. Finally, the two children dance delightfully together at the *dolce* passage (mm. 25-32). (See Example 5, p. 16).

The A' section (mm. 33-48) is almost identical with the A section. Child A starts over, dancing with more enthusiasm and more confidence at a *forte* dynamic and tries a challenging high jump at m. 43 during the *fortissimo* thirty-second-note flourish. Each child now has a good impression of the other and they will become good friends. Now we will watch a video of this movement performed by University of Georgia dance students.

Slide 13 (Sonata no. 2, movement 1)

(Play the first movement of No. 2)

Slide 14 (Sonata no. 2, movement 1: *tenuto* markings; phrase lengths; rhythmic notation; short bridges; scotch snaps)

We will take a peek at Sonata No. 2 now. The first movement of Sonata No. 2 also has an unusual tempo marking, as did Sonata No. 1. Have you ever seen the performance indication *Tempo di Minuetto* used for the first movement of a sonata or sonatina? A minuet, which is a dance in triple meter, usually appears as a second or third movement, doesn't it? Hässler decided to place the dance movement, boldly, as the opening movement. Since it is a minuet, it must sound like a real dance in three four. Not too fast, so people can dance nicely!

This minuet has interesting rhythmic content. Generally speaking, the minuet rhythm is stressed on the downbeat. As you see in the score, in mm. 2 and 4, the half notes on the second beats have the abbreviation *ten.* placed above them, which means they are to be played with *rubato* in an emphasized manner. The majority of the second beats in the A section have *tenuto* markings or are long notes. They all must be played with elegance to charm the audience.

For my graduate assistantship, I am currently accompanying ballet classes and observe dancers in class every day. I am not a dancer. However, here is my hypothesis. If this movement were to be danced, the dancers would make a certain kind of movement that looks like a curtsy, and making this motion naturally takes a bit more time. On the second beats the *tenuto* markings are possibly there to give the dancers enough time to execute the motion gracefully.

It is also interesting to note that the bar lines of mm. 1-13 in section A could be relocated one beat to the right, changing the original second beats to downbeats.

At several places, short bridges are used to create continuity from phrase to phrase. The dotted rhythm bridge in mm. 62-63 is a surprise compositional move. After the dotted rhythm bridge asserts its personality, m. 64 presents an even more surprising rhythm: scotch snaps, a syncopated rhythm in which a short, accented note is followed by a longer one.

Phrase structure is also interesting in this movement. As you can see, starting in m. 43, a four-measure sequence occurs twice but is interrupted at mm. 51 with a three-measure phrase. Here is the phrase structure of B section 6+4+4+4+4+3+4. In the B section, one phrase length is an odd number! The three-measure phrase structure fits well along with the neighboring phrases.

A performance practice issue arises in m. 52. The dotted rhythm of the left hand part should be played with the third note of each triplet in the right hand part. Sandra Rosenblum

discussed this Baroque notation in her book *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music*, which I will now quote:

Emanuel Bach's example illustrates the two kinds of binary notation commonly used in the Baroque and early Classic periods to express a form of compound ternary notation that did not yet exist: the quarter- and eighth-note triplet, or 2:1 relationship. The resulting combination of duple and triple notation was sometimes called "mixed meters." In performance, the dotted patterns were compressed and softened, and equal notes were expanded and made unequal. Both adjustments assimilated to the ternary rhythm, creating the sound of a quarter- and eighth-note triplet.

So, in this movement we learn how to play standard dotted rhythms, scotch snaps, and a wide variety of subdivisions of the beat, and rubato.

We will move to the Sonata No. 6, first movement.

Slide 15 (Sonata no. 6, movement 1)

I will play this movement and please enjoy.

(Play the first movement)

Slide 16 (Sonata no. 6, movement 1: opening harmony; dynamics; tempo changes; sustained bass beneath harmonic thirds in left hand; grand pause)

The very beginning of the first movement doesn't really sound like the beginning of a movement, does it? It sounds more like it started in the middle of a phrase. Why? The downbeat of the first phrase occurs on a ii_6 chord. This is the only time in the *Six Easy Sonatas* this happens. Fourteen out of seventeen movements start on a tonic chord, and two begin on a dominant chord.

As you can see in the score, four tempo changes are indicated. Hässler marked specifically where to slow down and where to go back to the original tempo: mm. 18-19 (*adagio* and *tempo primo*) and mm. 36-38 (*poco a poco adagio* and *tempo primo*). The sudden changes in speed and tempo remind me of an operatic aria, as do the variety of textures, the frequently

changing dynamic markings, and the placement of different dynamic levels at the same time in the right and left hands as in mm. 13-17.

The key of this movement is C major, and in m. 13-18 the passage sounds like the harmony is stuck on V (G major). It reminds me of a squirrel running on a treadmill and constantly getting faster and faster, the squirrel gets tired, and finally collapses.

Slide 17 (Play mm. 12-18 with image of squirrel on treadmill)

Back to Slide 16 (See p. 43)

This movement is, probably, technically the most difficult in the *Six Easy Sonatas*. The main challenges include broken chord passages in mm. 8-9, m. 11, mm. 41-46 and m. 79 and sustaining the pedal point on G while playing parallel harmonic thirds in mm. 13-16 and mm. 56-63. Like the first movement of Sonata No. 2, this is also a good opportunity for mastering a large range of rhythmic values from quarter notes to thirty-second notes.

The music stops all of a sudden without any resolution in m. 76 on a diminished chord, and then a grand pause follows at mm. 76-77. The silence is broken by a cadenza-like two-measure passage.

As you have now seen, this movement has unpredictable and whimsical events, even though its structure is quite standard. That's the reason why I find this movement very interesting. Here is one more observation: the phrase structure of mm. 19-33 is divided 2+2+2+3+2+4. Once again Hässler is grabbing our attention with an odd-numbered phrase length.

So, this is a good piece for learning to adjust *tempi* suddenly, to play with operatic freedom and to handle a wide variety of subdivisions of the beat.

Slide 18 (Bullet point summary of value of the *Six Easy Sonatas*)

I will summarize here. Hässler's *Six Easy Sonatas* are good pedagogical pieces because of the variety of characteristics I have mentioned. Students who study these pieces will improve technically and musically. Finally, these sonatas provide piano music of good quality that fills the transitional gap from intermediate to early advanced level in the classical style. Because the repertoire does not contain a lot of material of this quality at this level from the classical era, Hässler's *The Six Easy Sonatas* are especially valuable pedagogically. Thank you for your attention. Do you have any questions?