



more than the score...

JOHN CAGE

In a Landscape

for piano solo

Presented by Adam Tandler

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Adam Tendler

talks about

John Cage's *In a Landscape*

This piece has a rigid rhythmic structure. It's 15x15: that's 15 bars of music separated into five bars, seven bars, three bars. Sometimes we might hear that, as in the opening – where we really do have a clear phrase. Later in the piece, the music tends to blend between those structural barriers.

There are many different examples of phrasing in *In a Landscape*. It begins with short phrases, or short phrase markings. I think of them as slurs in the very beginning in the left hand. We can think of this as a series of short slurs, or we can think of them as a longer line, a longer melody, that leads to that final A.

A lot of the textures tend to overlap in this piece and their roles overlap, too. The score will indicate that a certain note should be more of a melody note, really on top of an accompaniment figure. This happens right at the very beginning with the two repeated B flats. Somehow, these have to be two different notes: one is more prevalent, one is our accompaniment figure.

There are points where these overlapping figures create a real task for the pianist to delineate between the phrases, the accompaniment phrase and the melody phrase. We have a melody in the right hand and an accompanying phrase in the left hand, and the right hand begins to creep into the left-hand area. We have to create a difference within a very soft dynamic range.

Rubato and counting

In a piece that is so rigidly structured, rhythmically, but also pleasing and outwardly beautiful, there is a fine line between not sprinkling too much rubato into it, but making it an expressive piece of music – which, to me, it really is.

For a piece that, on first hearing or even on first playing, may seem very repetitive, the more time we spend with *In a Landscape*,

the more we can discover its variety. Different melodic sections may reappear, but they may appear at a different part of a bar, and where a section may have started on beat 1 and has a very strong first beat, later it might come in on beat 3. A pianist who spends time with this piece will discover this, and these variations will help to define the different sections and where the dynamics may differ. It helps to count constantly through this piece so as to discover these moments. The first treble melody we hear happens on a strong first beat: it's hard to miss this beautiful moment.

The metronome marking of 80 is an invitation to keep the piece moving. Reigning in the rubato and keeping it in the context of a strong metronomic beat keeps the music going and prevents us from getting lost in this landscape.

Dynamics

This piece is mostly a soft piece: the loudest it ever gets is *mezzoforte*, according to the score. We begin with everything marked *pianissimo* and the pianist has to make a choice as to whether or not one hand is a melody and the other is an accompaniment.

Later in the piece, Cage writes out different dynamic shadings; for instance, the right hand here is *piano* and the left hand is *pianissimo*. In a piece that's always within the soft dynamic, that difference is rather significant and we need to take note of it.

In bars 108–110, we have tenuto left-hand notes that conflict with the right-hand phrases. Then, at bar 111, we hit our loudest

*The more time
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In a Landscape,
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for Louise Lippold

In a Landscape

for Piano or Harp Solo

John Cage (1912–1992)

♩ = 80

Measures 1-5 of the piece. The score is in 3/4 time. The right hand plays a melodic line with eighth notes and rests, starting on a B-flat. The left hand plays a bass line with quarter notes and rests, starting on a B-flat. A *pp* dynamic marking is present. A dashed arrow below the first measure indicates a *una corda* effect.

Measures 6-10. The right hand continues the melodic line, and the left hand provides harmonic support with quarter notes and rests.

Measures 11-15. The right hand features a more active melodic line with eighth notes, while the left hand continues with quarter notes and rests.

Measures 16-20. The right hand has a melodic line with a *p* dynamic marking. The left hand continues with quarter notes and rests, with a *pp* dynamic marking.

Measures 21-25. The right hand has a melodic line with a *(p)* dynamic marking. The left hand continues with quarter notes and rests.

Rhythmic structure = 15 x 15 (5.7.3)

———— = Pedal

----- = una corda