

# 'Staccato Beans'



**Composer:** Tan Dun (b.1957)  
**Nationality:** Chinese  
**Source/Date:** *Eight Memories in Watercolour* (1978/2002)

'Staccato Beans' is a piano solo by Chinese composer Tan Dun. The piece features in both Tan Dun's 1978 suite, *Eight Memories in Watercolour*, and in its 2002 revised release. This collection of piano solos is said to blend traditional Chinese folk music with sounds of the Western World. Dun's original release is said to recall the period of his life in which the violence of the Cultural Revolution was coming to an end and Western music was no longer banned, hence its important inclusion in his composition.

Tan Dun is a Chinese composer, multi-instrumentalist and conductor. He is widely known for his work in music for film, including scores for *Hero* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, as well as his compositions for the 2008 Beijing Olympics medal ceremonies.

## Preparation



As with all pieces that are intended to be performed at a fast pace, taking time to secure the basics first is a crucial step in the preparation process. The note patterns and finger position changes are relatively easily mastered. Be careful not to raise the tempo too quickly until you have truly mastered the articulations and dynamic changes.

Good hand positions and relaxed wrists are required to allow the various *staccato* and accented notes to be effective. Be sure to practise the left-hand opening bar in isolation, aiming for a clear contrast between the *legato* and *staccato* notes. Keep an even volume across the bar, taking care not to overly accent the first note of each bar so that when accents are required, they will have more of an impact.

When ready to assemble both parts together, rehearse at a slower speed to take the time needed to understand how best to balance the parts. Unlike some pieces where one hand takes on an accompanimental role throughout, this piece switches roles between both hands, as well as points where both hands should be well balanced to allow both contrapuntal lines to sing out, such as in bars 19 to 24.

The piece is an exercise in dynamic variation and control, sometimes moving from one extreme to another within the space of a couple of beats. It can be challenging to control dynamics effectively and without affecting your articulation or tempo. If this is proving challenging, you may find rehearsing along to a metronome click will help to maintain an even pulse throughout.

## Performance



'*Allegro scherzando*' translates as fast and playful. With a wide range of articulations and an equally varied range of dynamics, this extrovert piece is full of energy and character. The faster tempo on repeat helps to drive the performance forward to an even more exhilarating second half and final flourish. While the energy and drive needs to be constantly present, particularly in the quieter passages, be careful not to let this piece turn into a runaway train.

# 'Staccato Beans'

Tan Dun

Allegro Scherzando [ $\text{♩} = \text{c.144}$ ]

mp

(the second time faster)

5 2 1 2

3

3

Detailed description: This system contains the first five measures of the piece. The music is in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat. The tempo is marked 'Allegro Scherzando' with a quarter note equal to approximately 144 beats per minute. The dynamic is mezzo-piano (mp). The bass line features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with fingerings 5, 2, 1, 2. The treble line has a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure and a triplet of eighth notes in the fifth measure.

f

6

4

Detailed description: This system contains measures 6 through 10. The dynamic increases to forte (f). Measure 10 ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The bass line continues with eighth notes, and the treble line has eighth notes with accents.

8va

p

11

3

4

5

Detailed description: This system contains measures 11 through 15. The dynamic is piano (p). Measure 11 is marked '8va' for the treble line. The bass line has quarter notes with fingerings 3, 4, 5. The treble line has eighth notes with accents and a triplet in measure 15.

(8)

f

17

4 2 1 3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 17 through 21. The dynamic is forte (f). Measure 17 is marked with a repeat sign and '(8)'. The bass line has eighth notes with fingerings 4, 2, 1, 3. The treble line has eighth notes with accents and a triplet in measure 21.

ff

24

5 2 1

3

5

4

Detailed description: This system contains measures 24 through 28. The dynamic is fortissimo (ff). The bass line has eighth notes with fingerings 5, 2, 1. The treble line has eighth notes with accents and triplets in measures 25 and 27.

# Technical Exercises

In this section you will be required to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the groups below. The examiner will be looking for the speed of your response and will also give credit for the level of your musicality. Please see the syllabus guide for details on the marking criteria.

Candidates can choose to play either natural minor or harmonic minor scales

- Major scales, minor scales, chromatic scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, in legato feel, ascending and descending, across three octaves (except contrary motion scales and pentatonics, which must be played over two octaves).
- Candidates must choose to play **either** natural minor **or** harmonic minor **or** melodic minor scales in the exam. The examiner will ask the candidate to state which set of minor scales they have prepared.
- Pentatonic scales are right hand only.
- Groups A and B (scales & arpeggios) must be played from memory. You may use your book for Group C (Technical Studies).
- All groups are played unaccompanied (without metronome or click).
- Any fingerings shown are suggestions only.
- Candidates will be marked on tone quality and consistency, maintenance of pulse, and accuracy. Performances slower than the stated minimum tempo may be subject to qualitative judgement by the examiner, according to extent and commensurate with the grade.

## Group A: Scales

The minimum tempo for this group is ♩ = 126 bpm.

### 1. B major (three octaves, two octave example shown)

Musical notation for B major scale exercise. The exercise is written in treble and bass clefs. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The exercise consists of two octaves of ascending and descending scales, with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-5. The first two octaves are shown in the treble clef, and the last two octaves are shown in the bass clef. The notation includes a treble clef, a bass clef, and a grand staff bracket. The key signature is three sharps. The exercise consists of two octaves of ascending and descending scales, with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-5. The first two octaves are shown in the treble clef, and the last two octaves are shown in the bass clef.

### 2. B major | contrary motion

Musical notation for B major contrary motion exercise. The exercise is written in treble and bass clefs. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The exercise consists of two octaves of ascending and descending scales, with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-5. The first two octaves are shown in the treble clef, and the last two octaves are shown in the bass clef. The notation includes a treble clef, a bass clef, and a grand staff bracket. The key signature is three sharps. The exercise consists of two octaves of ascending and descending scales, with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-5. The first two octaves are shown in the treble clef, and the last two octaves are shown in the bass clef.

### 3. D<sup>b</sup> major (three octaves, two octave example shown)

Musical notation for D<sup>b</sup> major scale exercise. The exercise is written in treble and bass clefs. The key signature has two flats (Bb, Eb). The exercise consists of two octaves of ascending and descending scales, with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-5. The first two octaves are shown in the treble clef, and the last two octaves are shown in the bass clef. The notation includes a treble clef, a bass clef, and a grand staff bracket. The key signature is two flats. The exercise consists of two octaves of ascending and descending scales, with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-5. The first two octaves are shown in the treble clef, and the last two octaves are shown in the bass clef.

**Group C: Technical Studies**

In this section candidates must perform their choice of one of the following technical studies.

Technical Study 1

**Allegro**

The score consists of three systems of music. The first system is marked **Allegro** and **f**. The treble clef part begins with a series of eighth notes, with fingerings 1, 2, 4, 5, 2, 4, 1. The bass clef part has a chord with fingerings 1, 3, 5. The second system continues the treble clef exercise with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 5, 2, 3, 1 and 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. The bass clef part has chords with fingerings 2, 4 and 1, 3. The third system features a more complex treble clef exercise with multiple fingerings including 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 4, 5, 5, 4, 2, 1, 2, 4, 5, 4, 5, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 5, 3, 4, 2, 1, 2, 4, 5, 4, 2, 1. The bass clef part has chords with fingerings 1, 3, 5, 2, 5, 1, 4, 2, and a final eighth-note sequence with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 5.

[3]

[6]