

# 'Ticklin' Toes'



**Composer:** Florence Price (1857–1953)  
**Nationality:** American  
**Source/Date:** *Three Little Negro Dances* (1933)

'Ticklin' Toes' features as the first movement in Florence Price's work for piano, *Three Little Negro Dances* (1933). This became one of Price's most famous collections and drew heavily on the rhythm and syncopation of African-American spiritual music.

Florence Price was born in 1857 to a family of multiple ethnicities. Despite ongoing racial issues at the time in the USA, her family were well respected and she was initially taught music by her mother. Price had her first live performance as a pianist at just four years old and by eleven her first published composition was released. Price was very much a working musician, contributing to many areas of the industry throughout her career. She began as a performer and teacher, but went on to work as a composer for orchestral pieces, silent films and radio advertisements.

## Preparation



The first 16 bars fall into two halves, the second half as a variation of the first eight bars placed one octave lower. You can help give the section a sense of direction and flow by gently bringing out the lovely falling bassline pattern, while highlighting the syncopated feel of the melody above through crisp rhythmic patterns and articulations. Take care not to lose energy or speed in the final two bars of the section as the music drops suddenly down to *mezzo-piano* in bar 15.

The second section is built around three melodic ideas. Each of these eight-bar sections have their own characteristics and style rather like a dance with different sets of couples stepping forward for their moment in the spotlight on the dance floor. The grace notes in the opening idea (bar 17 onwards) should be kept crisp and short with a good contrast between the *legato* and *staccato* notes. Make sure to observe the rests in the left-hand part to keep the texture feeling light. The move to the on-beat pattern in the left-hand part for the second idea (bars 25–32), instantly changes the mood and style of the music. Bring out the accented minims (half notes) in bars 29 and 30, and again the accented two chords in bar 32, taking care not to rush at this point. Although the third section moves into the relative minor, using the A minor pentatonic scale for the melody, there is still a continued sense of sparkle and energy with the syncopated patterns and quick changing dynamics. Avoid any loss in tempo through this final part of the B section, keeping up the momentum ready for a return to the original A section.

Before attempting to '*accel. al fine*' as seen at the start of the coda, take time to establish your coordination and hand position changes for the sweeping patterns in bars 41 to 44 before bringing up the tempo to full speed.

## Performance



The third piece in a series of three dances, 'Ticklin' Toes' is full of lively syncopated melodies over a steady accompaniment pattern. Notice the performance instruction, '*allegro molto*'. While a fast tempo will help the music to sparkle, be careful not to lose shape and definition in pursuit of speed. A good performance requires a tempo that does not compromise technical accuracy, and can still deliver a performance full of contrast and charm.

# 'Ticklin' Toes'

Florence Price

**Allegro molto**

Musical notation for measures 1-4. The piece is in 4/8 time. The right hand features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with slurs and accents, and fingerings 2, 4, 2, 4. The left hand plays a bass line with chords and single notes, with fingerings 4 and 5. The dynamic marking is *mf*.

**To Coda**

Musical notation for measures 5-8. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, and fingerings 1, 2. The left hand continues the bass line with fingerings 5, 1, 2, 4. Measure 8 ends with a Coda symbol.

Musical notation for measures 9-12. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, and fingerings 2, 4, 4. The left hand continues the bass line with fingerings 9. The dynamic marking is *mf*.

Musical notation for measures 13-16. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, and fingerings 2, 1, 3, 5, 2, 4, 5, 4, 2. The left hand continues the bass line with fingerings 13, 2, 5, 1, 3. The dynamic marking is *mp (sub.)*.

Musical notation for measures 17-20. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, and fingerings 4, 1, 4. The left hand continues the bass line with fingerings 17. The dynamic marking is *p* in measure 17 and *f* in measure 20.

# Sight Reading

In the exam, you have a choice between either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask you which one you wish to choose before commencing. Once you have decided you cannot change your mind.

In the sight reading test, the examiner will give you an 8 bar piece in E major or A<sup>b</sup> major, to be played unaccompanied. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise. After the practise time, the examiner will ask you to commence the test.

While the assessed part of the test is not played to a metronome click, you may ask to hear the minimum tempo on a metronome at the start of, or throughout your practice time. Additionally, you may ask to hear a few seconds of the tempo on a metronome before the assessed part of the test begins.

## Sight Reading | Example 1

*Adagio* (♩ = 66)

[5]

## Sight Reading | Example 2

*Adagio* (♩ = 66)

[5]

Please note: The tests shown are examples: The examiner will give you a different version in the exam.

# Contemporary Improvisation & Interpretation

In the exam, you have a choice between either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask you which one you wish to choose before commencing. Once you have decided you cannot change your mind.

In the Improvisation & Interpretation test, the examiner will give you a 8-12 bar chord progression in the key of either E major or A<sup>b</sup> major. You will first be given 90 seconds to practise, after which the examiner will play the backing track twice. The first time is for you to practise and the second time is for you to perform the final version for the exam. For each playthrough, the backing track will begin with a one bar count-in. The tempo is ♩ = 60-130.

- At this grade, you have the choice to improvise either a melodic line or a chordal part to complement the backing track.
- During the preparation time, you will be given the choice of a metronome click throughout or a one bar count-in at the beginning.
- The backing track is continuous, so once the first playthrough has finished, the count-in of the second playing will start immediately.

## Improvisation & Interpretation | Example 1

♩ = 100

E B A E G#m F#m

E B A A B

[5]

A B E A B E

[9]

## Improvisation & Interpretation | Example 2

♩ = 100

A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> Cm B<sup>b</sup>m

A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>

[5]

D<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>

[9]

Please note: The tests shown are examples: The examiner will give you a different version in the exam