

# 'Deep Sleep Playing'



**Composer:** Michael Nyman (1944)  
**Nationality:** British  
**Source/Date:** *The Piano* (1993)

'Deep Sleep Playing' was written by Michael Nyman and featured in the 1993 film release, *The Piano*. Although the piece doesn't feature on the official soundtrack, it does make an appearance in the film and is also included in the official sheet music. Nyman received two esteemed nominations for *The Piano*, the Golden Globe Award and the BAFTA for Best Original Score, and the album achieved Gold status in both the UK and the States.

Michael Nyman is a British pianist and minimalist composer. He is best known for his work in film scores, but has also written a number of operas and has released several studio albums. Nyman has received many accolades throughout his career and is highly regarded among both musicians and the public, perhaps most notably he was appointed CBE in 2008.

## Preparation



This piece falls into five contrasting sections, each with its own technical challenges. While the opening thematic material is reworked in sections 3 and 5, these are not straight repeats and have their own tempos and subtly different characters.

The opening performance direction '*cantabile semplice*' means 'play simply' and 'in a singing style'. Once the notes are secure, rehearse placing each chord precisely and quietly, gently leaning into the first note of each two-bar phrase with a light accent on the first beat of the second bar of the phrase. As the music quickly accelerates through bars 6 and 7, the dramatic effect is heightened by the rapid *crescendo*. A metronome will be helpful in monitoring your tempo until the transition becomes instinctive.

The second section should retain energy and drive until the final bar (bar 15). A good hand position and relaxed wrist are required to deliver the repeated triplet chords, emphasising each half bar. Ensure that you lift the pedal as instructed to avoid a muddy texture and bring out the melody in the bass line.

Although the third section re-visits the melodic material from the opening section, take note of the performance direction '*tempo primo ma piu mosso*', i.e. at the original tempo but with more movement. Practise bars 20–21 in isolation to secure finger patterns and ensure that each note can be heard clearly, phrased in pairs.

The fourth section has an ABA structure with a contrasting middle section in  $\frac{4}{4}$  time. Study each part separately and at a slower tempo to secure the notes, articulations, and phrasing before putting both together. At bar 30, add extra arm weight to help emphasise the octave minims (half notes) marked '*pesante*', meaning heavy, as the bass line revisits the phrase first heard in the second section. Keep up the volume and intensity right through the final eight bars to allow for plenty of contrast with the final six bars of the piece. The final section should once again sound out simply with a final *ritardando* in the penultimate bar.

## Performance



A good performance will be technically accurate and deliver expressive and contrasting sections with excellent control over dynamics, tempo and meter. As with all minimalist compositions based around repetition and change, it is important to find nuance and musical expression in both each individual motifs and across the whole composition to deliver a varied and cohesive performance.

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Michael Nyman

$\text{♩} = 56$

*p cantabile semplice*

Ped.

*accel. molto*

$\text{♩} = c.72$

*ff marc.*

6

9

12

# 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.

- Major scales, minor scales, chromatic scales and arpeggios need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across four octaves.
- Contrary motion scales need to be played hands together, ascending and descending across two octaves.
- Major scales in thirds need to be played hands separately, ascending and descending across two octaves.
- The examiner may also ask for *legato* or *staccato*.
- 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.
- 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 ♩=160 bpm (except C major scale in 3rds: ♩=100 bpm)

1. C# major (four octaves, two octave example shown)

Musical notation for C# major scale exercise 1. The exercise is written for piano in treble and bass clefs. It shows two octaves of the scale in both directions. The treble clef part starts on C#4 and goes up to C#6, then down. The bass clef part starts on C#2 and goes down to C#0, then up. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above or below notes.

2. C# major | contrary motion

Musical notation for C# major scale exercise 2. The exercise is written for piano in treble and bass clefs. It shows two octaves of the scale in contrary motion. The treble clef part starts on C#4 and goes up to C#6, then down. The bass clef part starts on C#2 and goes down to C#0, then up. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above or below notes.

3. Cb major (four octaves, two octave example shown)

Musical notation for Cb major scale exercise 3. The exercise is written for piano in treble and bass clefs. It shows two octaves of the scale in both directions. The treble clef part starts on Cb4 and goes up to Cb6, then down. The bass clef part starts on Cb2 and goes down to Cb0, then up. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes.