



THE COMPLETE TRULY ASTOUNDING ANIMALS

by Peter Rudzik

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My introduction to this set of compositions was a charming illustration of a very focused 'Tuxedo-clad' hedgehog playing a grand piano. This '12 solo' volume of animal cameos was penned by Peter Rudzik, a Polish born composer residing in Calgary Alta. Mr. Rudzik won a scholarship from the Chopin Society in Warsaw which allowed him to appear on many national television and radio programmes. He continued his post-graduate studies at the Royal Danish Conservatory of Music in Copenhagen. He is now a faculty instructor at the Mount Royal University Conservatory in Calgary. His work, *Hot Springs*, was featured in the latest issue of the 'International Piano' magazine.

The twelve pieces featured in this publication are highly imaginative and truly evocative of the personality and antics of the animals they portray. They would be attainable by a good grade 5 or 6 piano student or as a quick-study for a more advanced student. Most of the compositions are one to three pages in length. A few of the charming titles in the volume are: *March of the Centipedes*, *Orange Striped Zebra*, *Thoughtful Rhino*, *Hedgehog at Night*,

and *Busy Woodpecker*. These pieces are good teaching tools as they present the student with a few technical as well as artistic hurdles to be dealt with.

Happy Grasshopper, for example demands a clear understanding of the differences between an eighth note verses a quarter note staccato, as well as a tenuto touch while maintaining a lively tempo and a cheerful mood.

The Boastful Kangaroo requires leaps of a tenth in the left hand with right hand chords that move chromatically. The composer's view of boastfulness is well illustrated by the inclusion of a very disconcerting quarter note occurring "G#" several times in the melody. Mr. Rudzik introduces a very specific use of the pedal for the first time in the book with his piece *Hedgehog at Night*. A good imagination, competence at various articulations, as well as an ability to move from Treble clef to Bass clef melodies in the key of D^b major will be a must in successfully performing this piece. Many other good teaching tools can be found in most of the other compositions

Of the twelve pieces in this book, nine are in 4/4 time. All of the animal

vignettes are rendered with much use of chromatic movement of chords, runs, and melodies. Most of the pieces are in ternary form with section's often modulating to an unexpected key. (In several instances going to III, bVI, or bV, but not to the relative minor or the Dominant.)

Two of my favourite pieces are *Tarantula's Tarantella*, which is 5 pages long, in 6/8 time, the key of A major modulating to F Major and performed at a 'Presto' tempo. As with most of the other pieces, the composer makes generous use of chromatic movement in both melody and accompaniment. The composition will satisfy a student's need for speed as well as the teacher's desire for accuracy of touch and shaping of phrases.

Whale Song, is another that appealed to me as a resident of the West coast. It is a very haunting, four page composition written in 6/8 time and played at an Andante pace. The pedal bolsters the eerie chromaticisms found in both hands. One of the challenges is to subtly alter the repeated passages which are evocative of whale song without changing the intended character of the piece.

Overall, I found the compositions brought a smile to my lips. Students will find many pieces in the publication both enjoyable and edifying. The pieces will also demonstrate to the aspiring student composer how simple ideas can be used to create colourful and charming compositions!

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