

🎹 *More Classics to Moderns, Books 1–6, Second Series*, by various composers; compiled and edited by Denes Agay. Yorktown Music Press, 2015. www.halleonard.com; 32 pp. each, \$10.99 each.

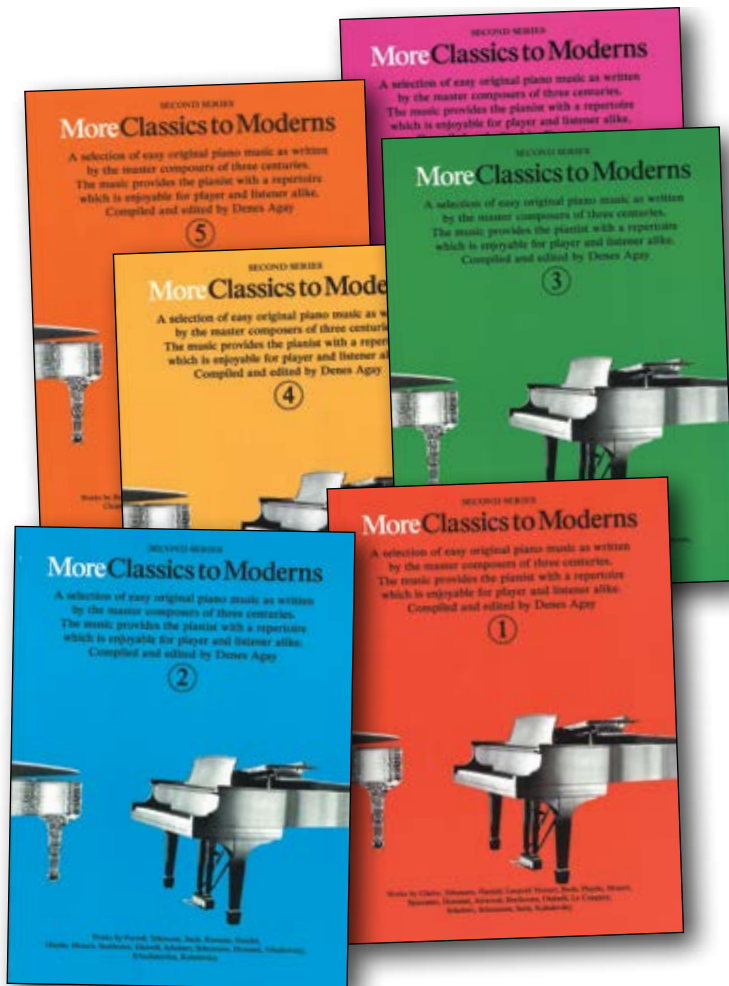
More Classics to Moderns are six books by Denis Agay that span around 400 years of piano repertoire, depicting pieces by some of the greatest composers of each era with an occasional spark of unknown artists.

The series is written progressively and contains attractive pieces in different styles and characters.

Book one is written for a student in the first to third years of piano study, while book six contains advanced compositions. Agay's first book has many dance pieces with a variety of meters, styles, characters and even some polyphonic playing.

Books two and three maintain the dance dominance, but add new musical and technical objectives. "Mary Farmer Returns from Work" by R. Schumann contains numerous challenges in both hands, while the "Brazilian Folk Song" by H. Villa-Lobos challenges the pianist with a demanding succession of octaves.

Books four through six have advanced compositions that are longer, and are often only portions of a complete work. Bach's "Prelude" appears without the "Fugue", while "Fughetta" is missing a "Prelude." Some accuracy discrepancies begin in book four. "Andante Grazioso" by Haydn is a transcription from a String Quartet Op.74, No. 2, 2nd movement, Bach's "Bourée" is "Bourée I" from the French Suite, "Interlude" is from L'Organist, and Mozart's "Minuet" is K. 335 instead of K. 355.



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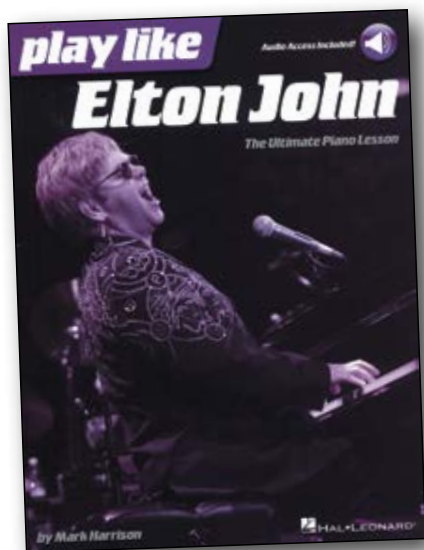
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The collection hovers around Western classical composers, containing only few pieces from regions outside of Europe. The addition of non-European contemporary works could further complement this series. It contains a wonderful pallet of music with suitable fingering, articulation and stylistic ideas. It can serve as a supplemental material as well as a main repertoire book. One should, however, consider supplementing the series with contemporary and non-Western pieces if used as a sole method. —Reviewed by Margarita Denenberg, Heidelberg University

🎧 **Play Like Elton John: The Ultimate Piano Lesson**, by Mark Harrison. Universal Music Publishing Group, 2015. www.halleonard.com; 112 pp., \$19.99.

Presented in a lesson format, *Play Like Elton John, The Ultimate Piano Lesson* is a detailed study for late-intermediate to early-advanced level pianists, who would enjoy discovering and playing Elton John's music. The book begins with an outline of what the reader will encounter, and an audio code for a specific link (without additional expense), for enhancing the discussed music. The audio excerpts are performed by author, Mark Harrison.



The introduction encourages the reader to examine John's approach to his stylistic harmonic and rhythmic techniques. This is followed with a historical overview of the musical equipment and various pianos that John

used throughout his career. Harrison discusses in more than one-half of his book, five of John's most famous songs. Utilizing the audio component, the reader can parallel the lesson overviews by exploring John's harmonic, rhythmic and stylistic trademarks through various snippet examples of each song. The complete song (with lyrics) follows the snippet passages.

The remainder of the book discusses selections (with audio examples) from 10 additional pieces. In this portion of the book, Harrison begins with highlighting signature phrases. These recognizable phrases are either retrieved from the introduction or a familiar segment of the song. The integral techniques portion of the book demonstrates the unique characteristic of John's rhythmic playing style. Harrison finishes the discussion of John's personalized musical approach by focusing on his stylistic DNA of harmonies and melodies.

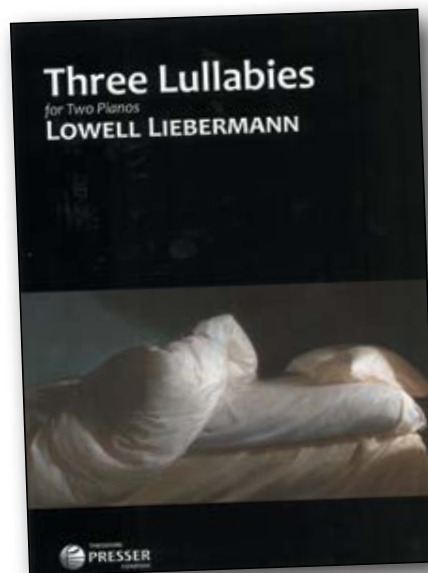
The book concludes with several pages featuring a list of albums and songs written throughout John's career. An additional list of video opportunities completes the book.

Mark Harrison has designed a unique instructional music book for pianists who would enjoy playing Elton John's music. The addition of the audio component is a compliment to the book. —Reviewed by Diane Higgins, NCTM, Charlotte, North Carolina

🎧 **Three Lullabies for Two Pianos**, by Lowell Liebermann. Theodore Presser Company, 2015. www.presser.com; 36 pp., \$34.99.

As a composer more interested in tonal beauty and human drama than innovation and the progress of history, Lowell Liebermann excites both performers and audiences with his music. *Three Lullabies* is a set of character pieces located firmly in the 19th-century tradition; perhaps Liebermann was inspired most immediately by Fauré. The materials are evocative of cradle songs: rocking rhythmic motives, sing-song melodic inflections. They retain a nocturnal mysteriousness even as the composer develops and layers them, building from intimacy to massive, sonorous climaxes. The ternary structure underneath all three

pieces is both simple enough to grasp at first hearing and richly varied with transitional passages, recombination of themes and motivic development.



This music will entice pianists with its colorful and efficient use of the instrument. But *Three Lullabies* is not only an example of sympathetic piano writing, it is two-piano chamber music in the best sense of the term. Liebermann creates polyrhythmic effects impossible for a single player; sensitive execution of these passages will likely present the greatest challenges and rewards in performance. Because the harmony is generally triadic the lullabies are only moderately difficult to read. Enharmonic respellings simplify the score's appearance when double flats and sharps would have made the voice-leading more clear for analysis. *Three Lullabies* was commissioned by the Dranoff Competition in 2001, but competition-level technical polish is not necessary to bring these works to vivid life. They will present a worthy challenge to advanced student pianists and an exciting addition to the two piano repertoire. —Reviewed by Michael Rector, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

