

A curated list of piano works by

J. N. Hummel

prepared by Andrew Brownell

Sonata in C Op. 2 No. 3

By the teenage Hummel, probably an excellent alternative for students starting to explore Mozart and Haydn Sonatas. (Nos. 1 and 2 in the collection are a piano trio and a violin sonata, respectively.)

<https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/9/9a/IMSLP04080-Hummel-Sonata-no1-Op2.pdf>

Rondo favori in E-flat Op. 11

This light and lively piece of moderate difficulty was still in the repertoire at the turn of the 20th century, and it was recorded by Ignaz Friedman, György Cziffra, and even in a violin arrangement by Jascha Heifetz.

http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/4/46/IMSLP333196-PMLP23505-Hummel_op.011_Rondo_HLitolff.pdf

Sonata in E-flat Op. 13

A significant advance from Hummel's previous effort at a piano sonata. The first theme is derived from a well-known Gregorian chant "Alleluia" for Easter, which only appears in full in the coda. The slow movement has some surprisingly lush, Schubertian passages, although the last movement will challenge young fingers. This is well within the reach of any student that can attempt Beethoven's Opp. 7 or 13.

https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/0/0a/IMSLP09520-Hummel_-_Op.13_-_Piano_Sonata_No.2.pdf

Fantasia in E-flat Op. 18

An astonishingly forward-looking work for 1805, it seems to be a response to Beethoven's *Sonata quasi una fantasia*, Op. 27 No. 1 and points to the Liszt Sonata a half-century later. Three movements are connected in an extended, 25-minute work that finishes unexpectedly in G major! Undoubtedly one of Hummel's most significant works.

https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/6/62/IMSLP03945-Hummel_Fantasia_Op18.pdf

Rondo quasi una Fantasia in E Op. 19

An extended, slow introduction with Chopinesque moments gives way to a virtuosic rondo. One may be reminded of an aria/cabaletta pairing in bel canto opera. An effective competition or recital piece.

<https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/c/ce/IMSLP283996-PMLP50456-Sibley1802.7336.Op.19.pdf>

Sonata in f minor Op. 20

The first movement seems to evolve out of Haydn's *empfindsamer* style of the 1770s, with rapid shifts of mood and expressive extremes. I feel the second movement presents serious structural problems, but the finale borrows the technique from the Op. 13 Sonata of deriving a main theme from another source, and then revealing it fully in the coda. Here, it is the Finale of Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony, treated as a fughetta.

<https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/c/c8/IMSLP09521-Hummel - Op.20 - Piano Sonata No.3 in F minor.pdf>

Sonata in C Op. 38

The first movement opens with a grand orchestral introduction, but unfortunately, the second theme groups get lost in an excess of passagework. This miscalculation mars an otherwise fine sonata: there is another lush slow movement, and the finale is witty and tremendously exciting

<https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/b/b9/IMSLP09522-Hummel - Op.38 - Piano Sonata No.4.pdf>

Dances for the Apollo Saal IV Op. 39

Hummel wrote five sets of dances for the Apollo Saal, an extravagant ballroom and theater complex on the outskirts of Vienna, initially for orchestra but also arranged for piano solo. Consisting of sequences of minuets and ländler, the fourth and fifth sets are more sophisticated than the first three, with certain movements being played *attacca*, creating a sort of musical narrative for the dancers. Apollo Saal IV concludes with a furious coda labelled "The Eruption of Vesuvius"!

<https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/e/e0/IMSLP21996-PMLP50485-Hummel - 039 - Taenze fur den Apollo Saal.pdf>

6 Pièces Très Faciles Op. 52

An excellent selection for early intermediate students. No. 1 is a 4-bar Cadenza establishing the key of No. 2, with which it should probably be paired in performance. The Ecossaise (No. 5) used to be in Suzuki Volume 2, and the Menuet (No. 3) appears occasionally in ABRSM books (Grade 4). Also published as Op. 42.

https://s9.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/8/84/IMSLP198733-PMLP32763-6_pieces_op.42-Hummel.pdf

Polonaise “La Bella Capricciosa” in B-flat Op. 55

An extended concert polonaise of about 15 minutes’ duration, widely played and published in the 19th century. The middle section features some unusual modulations, and the introduction returns before a virtuosic coda.

[https://s9.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/8/87/IMSLP22004-PMLP50501-Hummel_-_055_-_La_Bella_Capricciosa_\(Polonaise\).pdf](https://s9.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/8/87/IMSLP22004-PMLP50501-Hummel_-_055_-_La_Bella_Capricciosa_(Polonaise).pdf)

Variations on a theme from Gluck’s *Armide* Op. 57

Hummel wrote more than thirty sets of variations for piano; this charming set is perhaps his strongest. True to Mozartean style, the penultimate variation is an Adagio, this time a Chopinesque nocturne that starts in the minor mode, and the lively finale includes an extended coda with some harmonic surprises.

<https://s9.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d3/IMSLP284005-PMLP26960-Sibley1802.7336.Op.57.pdf>

24 Preludes Op. 67

Disappointment looms if one is looking for significant character pieces in this collection; most are just two lines of music. However, it is an historically important collection, in that it serves clearly as the inspiration for Chopin’s Preludes (some of which, it will be recalled, are also just two lines long) in all 24 keys and witnesses to the performance tradition of providing a brief, improvised prelude before a performance.

https://s9.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/3/30/IMSLP501669-PMLP136781-Hummel_J_-_Preludes_Op.67.pdf

Sonata in f-sharp minor Op. 81

This and the following sonata, Op. 106, are two of Hummel’s masterpieces. Schumann referred to Op. 81 as an “epic, Titanic” work and failed to master its difficulties before injury set in. It clearly serves as the model for Schumann’s first sonata and Brahms’ second. The first movement is improvisatory, almost a fantasy, the second is a proto-Chopinesque lament, and the finale is a hair-raising technical *tour de force*.

<https://s9.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/a/af/IMSLP283983-PMLP23517-Sibley1802.8336.Op.81.pdf>

Sonata in D Op. 106

Hummel’s last sonata, and the only one in four movements. More conservative than Op. 81, the second movement, “Un scherzo all’antico”, sounds oddly Schumannesque. The third movement is a profusely ornamented Nocturne, and the contrapuntal, virtuosic finale simmers down to a subdued Renaissance-like cadence.

<https://s9.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/7/74/IMSLP283995-PMLP23519-Sibley1802.8336.Op.106.pdf>

6 Bagatelles Op. 107

An interesting collection for the recital platform. Of note are No. 3 “La Contemplazione”, a slow and ravishing fantasia, and No. 6 “Rondo all’Ungherese”, a lively piece in gypsy style.

Rondo brillante in b minor Op. 109

A showpiece concert rondo of moderate difficulty.

<https://s9.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/6/6c/IMSLP283997-PMLP50528-Sibley1802.7336.Op.109.pdf>

24 Etudes Op. 125

Unjustly neglected, and of enormous value as didactic music. Its contents include a fugue, a balanced focus on exercises for the left hand, and a number of entries that clearly inspired Chopin’s Etudes, to which they are an excellent stepping-stone. A complete edition is almost impossible to find; the French publisher Oiseau-Lyre published an edition some years ago, but it is extremely rare.

A word about editions...

Sadly, very little of Hummel’s music remains in print. Of the piano music, a few volumes printed by the recently defunct Kalmus, mostly reprints of reliable old Peters editions, can still be found.

Universal Edition of Vienna still prints a 3-volume collection, edited by Charles-Wilfrid de Bériot; these c. 1900 prints also make up most of the available Dover anthology. I urge pianists to avoid this edition. The generous pedal markings totally contradict what we know of Hummel’s own performance style, most of the ornaments are written out in a very historically uninformed way, and there are some shocking mistakes.

Most of the IMSLP links I have provided above are to first editions, or editions by Peters or Litloff. Please feel free to E-mail me if you want help tracking down a score. I am a member of the Hummel-Gesellschaft-Weimar, who are happy to share scores from their archive.

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