

Thirty for Grace

for speaking pianist

Ian Pace

For Grace Hom

Composed in 2019

Performance Instructions

The pianist is required to speak throughout, reading a series of numbers (from 0 to 29) in Cantonese. These should be delivered in an audible ‘stage whisper’, always clear.

The piece should be played in a generally hushed manner throughout, though with care taken in terms of the small dynamic variations and momentarily louder material, which may be imagined as akin to the sounds of sirens over the music, while in bars 15 and 25, the accented chords should be played in a ‘spikey’ manner, protruding from the texture.

First Performance: City, University of London, 13 May 2019.
Ian Pace, piano.

Programme Note

Thirty for Grace, which was written to celebrate Grace Hom's 30th birthday, is a direct response to Skempton's *One for Molly*, which I knew through William A.P.M. was one of Grace's favourite pieces, alongside *Campanella 3*, Finnissy's arrangement of 'Love is here to stay', and Pascal Dusapin's Sixth *Étude* for piano. Permutations, re-arrangements and mutations of the pitch material in the Skempton pieces are used to generate a basic 'thread' which runs through the piece, during which the pianist also counts from 0 to 30 in Cantonese, Grace's language and a homage to Walter Zimmermann's piano piece *When I'm Eighty-Four*, which employs a similar strategy in Japanese. Part of the piece also configures some of this material in the manner of the verse of the Finnissy (with 'inserts' derived from potent moments in the chorus), together with some rather urgent overlays alluding to Dusapin.

Happy Birthday Grace – I hope you enjoy this!

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For Grace Hom

Thirty for Grace

Hushed but with some motion, ♩ = 60

Spoken/
whispered: lihng

yat

Ian Pace

The first system of the musical score is in 5/4 time. The right hand (RH) plays a melodic line starting with a *ppp* dynamic. The left hand (LH) has a rest in the first measure, then enters with a complex texture. Fingerings are indicated: RH 3-2-1, LH 1, and LH 2-3-4-5. A dynamic shift from *fff* to *ppp* is shown with a wedge. A sixteenth-note triplet is marked with a '6' above it. Pedal markings are present below the LH staff.

ppp

*Ped ad lib, with a halo to the sound,
but not muddy*

RH 3-2-1

LH 1

LH 2-3-4-5

fff ————— *ppp*

yih

sàam

The second system continues the melodic line in the right hand, starting with a triplet of eighth notes. The left hand remains silent. The melody features various intervals and some slurs.

sei

The third system continues the melodic line in the right hand, featuring a triplet of eighth notes. The left hand has a triplet of eighth notes. The system concludes with a final triplet in both hands.

6

ff (lower line only) *pp* *ppp*

luhk

7

(sempre *ppp*)

chat

8

baat

gáu

9

pp

p marc.
(very slight emphasis on circled notes,
not like a *Hauptstimme*)

11 *sahp* *sahpyat*

13 *sahpyih*

14 *sahpsaam* *(pp)* *(p)* *(pp)* *(p)* *(pp)* *(p)*

(tremolo as continuous as possible) *L.H.*

15 *sahpsei* *sahpngh*

Accents here and in bar 25 should be somewhat 'spiky' and jar with the line. *Play with complete change of texture and voicing*

rit. *ppp* *subito pp* *una corda*

sahpluhk

A tempo **ppp** (as before)

Musical score for 'sahpluhk' starting at measure 17. The score is written for piano with three staves. The right hand has a melodic line with triplets and a 3:2 ratio. The left hand has a bass line with a 3:2 ratio and a **pp** dynamic. The instruction *tre corde* is present.

sahpchat

sahpbaat

Change of texture again

Musical score for 'sahpchat' and 'sahpbaat' starting at measure 18. The score is written for piano with three staves. The right hand has a complex melodic line with a 5:4 ratio and a **pp** dynamic. The left hand has a bass line with a 5:4 ratio and a **pp** dynamic. The instruction *una corda* is present. The score includes a section marked 'L.H.' and a section marked 'subito ppp'.

sahpgáu

yihsahp

As before

Musical score for 'sahpgáu' and 'yihsahp' starting at measure 20. The score is written for piano with three staves. The right hand has a melodic line with a **subito p** dynamic. The left hand has a bass line with a 3:2 ratio and a **mpz** dynamic. The instruction *tre corde* is present.

yihsahpyat

yihsahpyih

Change of texture again

22

p marc.

p (both hands)

3:2

9:7

yihsahpsaam

yihsahpsei

As before

24

mf

subito ppp

9:7

9:7

5:4

yisahpnah

As before
A tempo

Change of texture again
accel.

26

p (both hands)

f

subito ppp

5:4

3:2

yihsahpluhk

27

4:3

5:4

yihshpchat
(can be spoken slightly earlier
for audibility)

28 *(ppp)*

4:3 6:5

fff *ppp*

yihshpbaat

yihshpgáu

29

pppp

una corda

sàamsahp

31

5:4 9:7