



# Ownership, commitment and ongoing reward

Since the formal release of *Piano Series 17* in December last year, many teachers have been introduced to the repertoire through seminars and workshops organised by the AMEB and by teacher organisations. It has been wonderful to witness the enthusiasm with which the series is being received.

All the material was selected because of its distinctive and accessible musical character. Each of the pieces invites players to explore and experience the music in their own particular way. Perhaps the most valuable role a teacher can play is to lead their students towards this kind of ownership and commitment, assisting them to see what gives each piece its own special character, and helping every player to make the music their own. Once experienced, this level of personal engagement provides the framework for maximum satisfaction and achievement, together with the incentive for active and sustained learning.

Any series of grade books will show a progressive level of difficulty from one grade to the next. Music can throw out many different types of challenge, not confined to the purely technical. For example, some pieces may demand refined listening skills and call for precisely judged quality, balance and blend of tone. Others may require the player to make sense of surprising harmonic and expressive digressions, or pose special problems of style or musical characterisation. As a teacher, I have always sought to ensure that every student plays at least some repertoire that lies well inside their technical capacity, enabling them to experience the expressive core of a work

without being constantly pre-occupied with technical concerns. This does not mean that such works are 'easy'. Rather, they explore aspects that go beyond the purely mechanical.

In *Series 17*, the majority of works in each grade are entirely consistent with the normal technical expectations for the level. Occasionally, there may be one piece that extends the technical demands just a little further. Conversely, there may sometimes be a work that contains less technical complexity but which demands special musical and expressive awareness. Such pieces, when they are encountered, are certainly not to be regarded as 'easy options'. On the contrary, players who present them will be expected to demonstrate a level of finesse and musical insight commensurate with the expressive demands of the works themselves.

The point of all this is to emphasise that music is much more than mere accuracy of notes and note values. The aim is always to translate the notes on the page into convincing and personalised expressive gestures. Each player will bring their own background and experience to the music that they play. This is what makes one player's interpretation different from another's, and such individuality is to be celebrated. I hope that *Series 17* will provide teachers and students with a personal and rewarding musical experience that invites ongoing engagement and commitment.

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