

Joseph Akins



All music composed by Joseph Akins (HeartSong Music – BMI) except for Tennessee Waltz by Redd Stewart and Pee Wee King (Sony/ATV Acuff Rose Music – BMI)

All music transcribed by Joseph Akins except for “Feeling Joy”, transcribed by Rebecca Oswald
Original performances can be found on the albums from Joseph Akins titled Masterpeace (2007) and Spirit Touch (2009) available through www.josephakins.com and popular internet retailers.

Proofreading by Kathy Parsons. Thanks to Greg Maroney for additional proofreading.

Layout and design by Linda Maroney

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ISBN 978-0-9834960-0-7

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Contact: joseph@josephakins.com

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Notes from Joseph Akins

The ten selections in this booklet come from two of my albums: *Masterpeace* and *Spirit Touch*. I selected these pieces based on popularity and how often I play them in concert. It's my hope that the following notes about them will give you a deeper understanding of the music. Tips and information on form, performance, improvisation and more are included.

Each piece is a note-for-note transcription of the recordings. However, I typically do not play them exactly the same way each time. Sections marked *improvisation* are played differently each time I play them. You can play these sections as written or with your own improvisation. If you are new to improvisation, start simple by changing a note here and there. Use the chord symbols to help you choose your notes. Note that a majority of the improvisation occurs in the right hand.

Regarding the sustain pedal - I hold it down a lot. Typically, I lift the pedal during chord changes as marked in the music by chord symbols. Although at times, the pedal may need to be lifted between chord symbols to avoid a sustained dissonance. Your ear is the best judge.

One last note: I encourage you to listen to the recordings multiple times. This will help you with your performance and enjoyment. However, be sure to make each piece your own.

Spirit Touch

This was the first piece I composed after our 23-year old Siamese cat, Mr. Applebee, passed away. He was a very loving kitty cat who my wife looked after for all those years and who I "adopted" when he was age 10. This music expresses the emotions we were going through at the time of his passing. He was a gentle soul and touched our spirit.

This piece is played slowly. The left hand pattern at the beginning was inspired by a piece by David Lanz called "Painting the Sun". The primary melody for "Spirit Touch" enters at bar 5 and the secondary melody begins at bar 13. These two melodies return throughout the piece. The music from bars 39 through 48 sets up the return of the secondary melody at bar 49. Two sections in this piece are played very slowly with no tempo (rubato): bars 36-37 and 64-65.

The Butterfly Ride

With this piece I wanted to capture a sound similar to music I've heard from composers Erik Satie and Horace Silver. The latter had a big influence on me while studying jazz piano in college. When it came time to name this piece, I wanted to choose one by listening to the recording. I concluded that it sounded like a free, flowing ride. Therefore, I began to think about different rides that humans go on (plane ride, bus ride, etc.) but nothing seemed to fit. Then, I began to let my imagination run wild. I wondered what it would be like to ride a butterfly? That was it! It's a butterfly ride!

"The Butterfly Ride" has a left hand that alternates between a bass note and chord, and a right hand that plays lyrical melodies. The form is based on a 12-bar blues structure (although it is not meant to

be played bluesy). After the 6-bar introduction, the primary melody begins at bar 7. Be sure to play the left hand lightly.

Bars 31 to 54 are improvised. During the G major and C major chord symbols, I primarily played from a G pentatonic scale (G-A-B-D-E) or a G lydian scale (G-A-B-C#-D-E-F#). During the Db in bar 38, I played from a B lydian augmented scale (B-C#-D#-E#-F##-G#-A#). In bars 47-48, I outlined the chord tones from a Bb major seven (Bb-D-F-A-C), and in bars 49-50, I played from an Ab lydian scale (Ab-Bb-C-D-Eb-F-G). The improvisation from bar 89 to the end is from a G lydian scale (G-A-B-C#-D-E-F#). You can play the improvisation as written or make up your own. Either way, remember you are riding a butterfly!

Night Shadows

This haunting, mysterious sounding piece was inspired by music from David Lanz. At the time of composing, I was listening to his albums *Spirit Romance* and *A Cup of Moonlight*. When it came time to name it, Unita (my wife) commented on the composition's haunting sonority. To me, it always sounded like night music. Hence, I titled it "Night Shadows".

"Night Shadows" begins with an ascending pattern (G-Bb-D-Db) that I play by crossing my hands. The octaves in bars 3 and 4 are played with both hands too. Even though this intro is not marked as improvisation, I play it differently with each performance.

The primary melody begins at both bars 6 and 19. When arriving at bar 31, be sure to play completely free of tempo until bar 34 (although you could play bar 33 in tempo). Bar 34 begins the secondary melody with a contrast in mood. The primary melody returns at bar 48 and leads into an improvisation that begins at bar 56. When arriving at bar 68, be sure to play free of tempo through bar 70. Following, the primary and secondary melodies are played one more time (notice how the left hand crosses over to play the melody from bars 89 to 92). Finally, the piece ends with the same ascending pattern as the introduction.

Feeling Joy

I began composing this piece at a very slow tempo while playing live at a local spa. Afterwards, I continued to develop it at home. By the time it was finished, I was playing it at a much quicker tempo (adagio). Since the finished composition sounded joyful to me, I decided to call it "Feeling Joy".

The famous rock band Journey, one of my favorite rock bands from the 80's, inspired the bridge of this piece. As a teenager, I played their music often in rock bands. It doesn't sound like any particular song. It just reminds me of them.

The tempo is held steadily throughout the piece. There is no ritardando or rubato in this one. It's a good one to practice with a metronome! The primary melody is introduced in bar 9 and is repeated before the secondary melody (the bridge) begins at bar 49. Bars 69 to 87 were improvised from a D major scale (D-E-F#-G-A-B-C#). I also tend to elaborate from bar 132 to the end. I hope you enjoy playing it!

Tennessee Waltz

Being the only non-original in this book, my father taught this famous song to me when I was 12 years old. He couldn't read music so he taught it by ear. In fact, he taught several songs to me this way so I could play them in his band. He was a great guitarist and bandleader.

Regarding tempo, notice the introduction and ending are played much faster than the primary melody that comes between. This melody begins at bar 8 and is repeated throughout. Bars 41 through 55, a variation on the melody, can be improvised, although I often play this section just like it's written.

I encourage you to seek out and listen to recordings of this popular song by different vocalists such as Patti Page and Nora Jones. It is a classic.

Masterpeace

I composed this piece rather quickly one day while playing the piano rhythmically (but gently) like a drummer. In other words, it felt as though I was playing a percussion instrument with my hands exchanging strikes at the keys. When it came time to name it, I decided to make it the title track to *Masterpeace* since it was a good opener for the album.

The simple 8-bar introduction sets the stage for the first melody that begins at bar 9. At bar 25, a majestic melody begins that reoccurs throughout the piece (watch bar 31 as the right hand reaches down to play a C stepping to a D an octave below middle C). This melody is further developed in bar 41 and continues to ascend through bar 60. Following, everything played thus far is repeated (but with the melodies transposed one octave higher). Improvisation begins at bar 136 and continues to the end. I primarily played Eb and Ab pentatonic scales (Eb-F-G-Bb-C and Ab-Bb-C-Eb-F) during the Eb and Ab chord symbols respectively.

Have fun with this piece. I sometimes play it a little faster than written and I never play it the same way twice. Allow the hands to bounce and flow like water.

Joy of Being

I composed this song sometime during the 90's and played it for several years before I recorded it on *Masterpeace*. I always felt that it sings. In other words, it has a lyrical quality and pop song structure (verse, chorus, etc.). When it came time to name it, the title was inspired from reading a passage about the joy of just being alive.

The 8-bar introduction is played gently and freely. The first verse begins at bar 9 followed by a pre-chorus from bars 17 through 24. The first chorus is from bars 25 through 32. All this is repeated and further developed from bars 33 through 58. Following, I played an improvised solo that was built from an Eb major scale (Eb-F-G-Ab-Bb-C-D). The song ends with a reappearance of the gentle introduction.

In the Country

I began composing this piece after returning home from a trip to Chattanooga, Tennessee (where I was raised). Feeling inspired from viewing the countryside during my drive home, I composed "In the Country".

The descending melody during the first six measures precedes the steady rhythm that continues throughout the piece. In the right hand, there are two primary melodies: one begins with a pick-up into bar 7 and the other begins at bar 15. They reoccur throughout the piece. Beginning at bars 31 and 65 are two identical sections that flow and contrast with the primary melodies.

Improvisation for this piece begins in bar 94. I primarily used pentatonic scales (G-A-B-D-E) and patterns that I learned from playing as a youth in my father's traditional country music band. Be sure to change the pentatonic scale for each chord (starting from the root). The piece ends with a reappearance of the introduction followed by a tender, soft landing on the tonic.

Present Moment

This song has been popular on Whisperings Solo Piano Radio and also appears on the album, *Whisperings Solo Piano Volume 1*. This transcription is of the original recording on *Masterpeace*.

I like the introduction to this one - the descending shape and colorful sound. Beginning at bar 7, the left hand starts a pattern that was inspired by rock songs I've heard where the guitarist is playing a simple repetitive eighth note pattern throughout the song. Then in bar 11, a lyrical melody is introduced and developed throughout the piece. Be sure to cross the right hand over the left hand to play the bass clef notes and be sure to hold the pedal down a lot. Although rhythmic, this piece should sound dreamy from lots of sustain pedal use.

I think of bars 49 to 76 as the bridge. It breaks away from the rhythmic pulse in the left hand for a slight variation in mood. I typically play this section slightly different each time but with little deviation from the written music. In bar 77, be sure to reintroduce the left hand pattern very softly as though it is fading in.

Keys to the Heart

I began composing this piece on December 19, 1994, the day my father went to be with the Lord. I had spent the previous two years watching him gradually lose his abilities to function in our world from having Alzheimer's disease. As you can imagine, it had a great impact on my life and music.

Measures 1 through 11 were completely improvised. Played freely, I mostly used a C minor pentatonic scale (C-Eb-F-G-Bb). Bar 12 starts a steady pattern in the left hand that continues throughout the piece. The primary melody begins at bar 16 and the secondary melody begins at bar 44. Beginning in bar 52, another melody is introduced that quickly changes the mood. From bars 76 to 119, I improvised. Most of the material is from a C natural minor scale (C-D-Eb-F-G-Ab-Bb) with a couple of exceptions (e.g. notice the A natural during the F/A and the B natural during the G7). Following the improvisation, the melodies are repeated with embellishment.

I hope you enjoy playing all these pieces. Don't hesitate to contact me with any questions. I wish you many blessings.