

Studies in Song

New *Standards* for Piano

Ned Gerhart

large print edition
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Preface

A "standard" song is not so just because it is well-known and often-performed. This label also implies a certain common form as well. Standards are usually thirty-two bars long. These thirty-two bars typically have an "AABA" organization, containing four eight-bar phrases where the third section, or "bridge", is a contrasting interlude between repetitions of the main melody. Of course, much variation on this principle exists, and many books have been written about these structures within songs. The "AABA" form has been the predominant organizational device used for Broadway musical songs and jazz (other than the "blues" form) since the beginning of the twentieth century. Most of the pieces in this book have an "AABA" structure.

This book is the result of a hobby I stumbled on in 1990. The nice thing about creating something as a hobbyist is that you don't have to please anyone's taste besides your own. When one's own satisfaction with the result is all that matters, artistic development becomes like the evolution of life in the Galapagos Islands. Without exposure to the homogenizing effect which regular criticism or concerns for merchantability might produce, an artist who is an independent hobbyist, remote from cares beyond his own happiness, is arguably more inclined to develop an individual, eccentric style, at least if he continues to stay with it long enough. I have been doing my piano music thing alone in obscurity for sixteen years. Now that you have come upon my island, I hope you will be able to enjoy whatever special uniqueness I have managed to evolve.

I have tried to use as few instructions or dynamic markings as possible in the music. You are an artist too, and I know you have good taste. If you have not previously played jazz or popular music, the indication *swing-style 8th notes* means that 8ths should not be played with the usual 50/50 division per beat, they should be played more like 60/40 per beat. Can you dig it?

N.G.
July, 2006

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Candles in the Moonlight

This tune has been statistically the most popular item downloaded at www.nedgerhart.com. I think it is one of my best melodies too! It features an ordinary "AABA" form, but I am rather pleased with the way the first two sections are actually in different keys. Of course you will see that right off, but the shift is so subtle that I believe listeners hardly notice anything unusual happening.

The musical score is presented in four systems, each consisting of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 84. The first system begins in 4/4 time with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a melody with triplet markings and a bass line with chords. The second system continues in the same key and time signature. The third system shows a key change to two flats (Bb) and a change to 3/4 time, with the melody and bass line adapted accordingly. The fourth system concludes in the new key and time signature, ending with a repeat sign. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

First system of musical notation, consisting of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The music is in a key with two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/8 time signature. It features a melodic line in the treble and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the bass.

Second system of musical notation, continuing the piece. The treble staff shows more complex chordal textures and melodic fragments, while the bass staff maintains a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Third system of musical notation, featuring several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a bracket) in both the treble and bass staves, adding rhythmic complexity to the melody and accompaniment.

Fourth system of musical notation, showing a continuation of the melodic and harmonic themes. The bass line includes some slurs and ties, while the treble line has some rests and dynamic markings.

Fifth system of musical notation, the final system on the page. It includes a *rit.* (ritardando) marking in the bass staff, indicating a gradual deceleration of the music. The system concludes with a double bar line and a final chord in the bass.

October in Paris

Ah, October in Paris, chestnut leaves falling... This AABA-form tune is only 16 bars long because I chose to use 4/4 time rather than 2/2, which would have been the traditional choice. Before continuing after the sustained chord three measures from the end, I like to take a long, deep breath and feel the hair on my neck stand up a moment.

Wistfully, ♩ = 68

The musical score is written for piano in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 68 beats per minute. It consists of 16 measures, organized into four systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody is characterized by a wistful, descending line in the right hand, often accompanied by chords. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with a mix of single notes and chords. The piece concludes with a sustained chord in the right hand and a final melodic line in the left hand.

First system of musical notation, consisting of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music features a melodic line in the treble and a supporting bass line in the bass.

Second system of musical notation, continuing the piece with similar melodic and bass line development.

Third system of musical notation, showing further melodic and harmonic progression.

Fourth system of musical notation, featuring a crescendo hairpin and a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) in the treble staff.

Fifth system of musical notation, concluding the piece. It includes a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and a *rit.* (ritardando) instruction. The system ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.