

Erik Satie

Gymnopédie No. 1

arranged for vibraphone
by Jim Casella



Gymnopédie No. 1 by Erik Satie arr. Jim Casella
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Level: Medium
Approximate playing time: 3'30"

Gymnopédie No. 1

Erik Satie (1866–1925)
arranged by Jim Casella

Slow and Tender (♩ = approx 72)

Vibraphone

pp
Note: Pedal every bar unless otherwise noted.

sim.

pp

9 *f*

Ped.

18

Ped.

25

Ped.

32

Sample
Image

40 *pp*

48 *f* *pp*

Ped.

p

Ped.

65

Ped.

72

Notes

Gymnopedie No. 1 is one of three short piano pieces written by French composer and pianist Erik Satie (1866-1925). This is perhaps Satie's most treasured and popular work, which may have introduced a unique flavor of ambience and harmonic function for its time. While seemingly repetitive and simple, there is a complexity in how the music alternates between two primary major seventh chords while still leaving a sense of mystery and uncertainty as to which direction it will take the listener.

This arrangement for vibraphone closely follows the original piano piece, although several challenges were presented in making this happen. First, the key of the piece has been changed from its original in D to F to better fit the range of a standard vibraphone. On paper it looks rather simple; however, the technicalities discussed below create a subtly challenging piece requiring sensitivity and precision.

On the piano, the melodic line is separated from the harmonic accompaniment by a distance on the large keyboard which makes these voices distinguishable. Because the vibraphone is limited to three octaves, it was particularly challenging to voice the piece so that the harmonic accompaniment didn't clash or overlap with the melody. As such, the soloist should take care to play the accompaniment parts more delicately and to use a more pronounced touch on the melody to help differentiate these lines. In general, the melody can be easily identified in the score by stems which face upward. Experimenting with graduated mallets may also be an option to consider.

Unless otherwise specified, pedaling should occur on every measure. Due to the sustained nature of the harmonic accompaniment, pedal dampening is not the only method used to cancel sustained pitches from ringing together. Several cases of mallet dampening are employed so that changing notes (melodically or harmonically) don't clash with those that precede them. Mallet dampening is marked with an X on the staff line (or space) following the note that needs to be dampened. In most cases this would occur silently as the next note is being struck. However, there are times this is not possible since all mallets are engaged in striking a chord. In these instances the note should be dampened immediately following the chord rather than simultaneously with it. This may take a little coordination to master.

Gymnopédie No. 1 is rarely performed in straight time with no ebbs or flows. Adding an expressive degree of tempo flexibility will help bring more life to the piece. Specific markings for *accelerando* or *rallentando* are intentionally not used so that each performer can make their own unique statement with it. There are several recordings of performances by great pianists available if you're looking for ideas or inspiration.