

Dance of the Paper Umbrellas by Elena Kats-Chernin (2013)

Syllabus topics:	Year 9/10:	Australian Music (compulsory topic)
	Music 1:	Australian Music; An Instrument and Its Repertoire; Music of the 20 th & 21 st centuries (elective topics)
	Music 2:	Australian Music (Year 11 elective topic) Music of the Last 25 Years (Year 12 core topic)

Composer's note: This piece was written for a Hush CD project. The idea for it started when I visited the leukaemia ward at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne and witnessed what wonderful work Dr Catherine Crock (the head of HUSH Music Foundation) and her team do. That experience was still with me, when a few days later I sat at my piano. I wondered what kind of piece I could write that would be uplifting. I wanted to enter the world of magic and dreams. I imagined a cake adorned with multi-coloured umbrellas. A dance formed in my head, starting with a pattern in harp, marimba, plucked strings and flutes.

Listening note: The recording of this work can be accessed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tOFvsjWxVo

Please note that this recording is the 4 hands piano version (similar to what you will hear in the concert) and is an approximation of the solo piano score. Elena writes:

"I never write out our 4 hands versions, we keep changing it anyway and it is very specific to how we perform. And I just never had the time to write out anything, we like the same visual image to look at while we play."

The score has recording markers as reference points for you to listen to as you follow the score.



Score reading activities

Listen to bars 1 – 40 (0:00 – 1:15) whilst following the score. The questions below are to be answered from the score.

1. What does *Leggiero Vivace* mean? _____

2. How does the articulation of this section support the expressive marking?

3. There is no key signature provided for this piece, but what is the tonality?

4. How does the composer develop the 2-bar motif presented in b. 1-2?

5. Describe the melody from bars 5-12.

6. What happens at bar 25?

Listen to bars 41 – 2:12 (1:15 – 2:12) whilst following the score. The questions below are to be answered from the score.

7. Describe the structure of this section in detail

8. Name the harmonies used in bars 57-64.

Bar 57	Bar 58	Bar 59	Bar 60
Bar 61	Bar 62	Bar 63	Bar 64

9. What do you notice about these harmonies?

10. Name one rhythmic device used from bars 57-72.


11. Name the harmonic device which occurs in bars 62 and 63.

12. Looking at the whole work, provide a summary of musical features which characterise Elena Kats-Chernin's style.

Answers

1. Lightly, played fast and lively
2. Staccato articulation dominates this section which provides a light touch. The use of accents (eg. b. 5) and tenuto markings (eg.20) provide a rhythmic vitality which supports the lively feel.
3. E natural minor (tonic-dominant presented in b. 1, no leading note D# makes it the natural minor, not the harmonic minor). Note abbreviation to pentatonic version (E, F#, G, B, D only) until bar 24.
4. From b. 3 onwards the motif is harmonised (Emin7 in b. 3, Gmaj7 in b. 4 ie. Chords I and III) and form a harmonic ostinato until bar 24.
5. Two 4-bar phrases; highly motivic; notes are entirely derived from the harmonic ostinato; fragments provide the melodic material for remainder of section.
6. Distinct change of harmonic 'flavour'; new 4-bar harmonic ostinato introduced (rising); pentatonic abbreviation of tonality discontinued and full natural minor now used (ie. addition of a and C); melodic material contains fragment of original melody (b.11-12); descant dominant pedal introduced in b.37.
7. The section can be divided into four sub-sections:
 Bars 41-48: arpeggio figures dominate; staccato articulation; predominantly contrary motion
 Bars 49-56: texture thickens as new sustained melody introduced in RH descant (highlight this); same chord structure as bars 41-48
 Bars 57-64: texture thickens again as new RH triadic melody introduced; dramatic change of tonality (now major)
 Bars 64-72: repeat of bars 57-64 but with some harmonic and melodic variation.
- 8.

Bar 57	Bar 58	Bar 59	Bar 60
E major	A major	C major	F9
Bar 61	Bar 62	Bar 63	Bar 64
Bb major	Eb major	C# dim	A7

9. They are predominantly major triads – distinct change from minor tonality of the piece.
10. Syncopation (RH piano in bars 58, 60, 62, 63), rhythmic ostinato ()
11. Suspension on first beat.
12. Minor tonality; continuous quaver pulse; syncopated melodic lines; highly motivic, fragmented melodic lines, insistent ostinati.