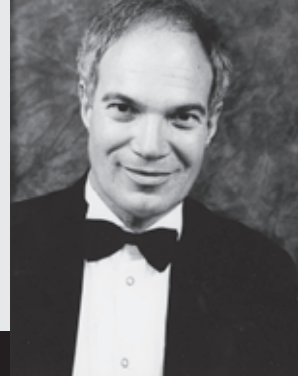


RESEARCH ARTICLES

NAVORSINGSARTIKELS

Three Dimensions for piano – Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph



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The prescribed repertoire for the 2008 Eleventh Unisa/Vodacom International Piano Competition included a brand new piano work by the foremost South African woman composer Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph. As I sat in the auditorium listening to one of the contestants perform her *Partials and Pedals*, I was once again struck by Zaidel-Rudolph's innate skill at idiomatic writing for the piano. She knows her instrument – an excellent pianist herself, she trained with, amongst others, the world famous pianist, John Lill in London.

Zaidel-Rudolph's piano works span the length of her creative career and bear testimony to the significant development of her compositional vocabulary and language. These works highlight her journey from free atonality and the formal structures and ordering of the neoclassical style (*Sonata no. 1*), through experimentation with the spatial dimensions of sound and trans-cultural elements (*Three Dimensions*), to a multi-tonal vocabulary which integrates Jewish mysticism and cabbalistic religious elements (*Virtuoso 1*).

Virtuoso 1 is arguably her best-known piano work – commissioned and conceived for the Fourth UNISA/Transnet International Piano Competition of 1988 – it has frequently been performed, recorded and broadcast. It is currently included in the Unisa Grade VIII piano examinations syllabus and has become a popular choice for candidates.

A piano work of Zaidel-Rudolph's that warrants more exposure and greater attention is *Three Dimensions* for piano. She composed this piece in 1974 during her sojourn as a postgraduate composition student at the Royal College of Music, London. This extraordinary work provides the creative performer with an excellent vehicle for imaginative interpretation; its distinct African flavour situates it as a prime example of indigenous art music. Because of its effective pianistic felicities and unique rhythms, it is also a most satisfying work to perform. It would make an artistic addition to any national or international recital programme – audiences are fascinated by its extraordinary and exotic sound world and unusual timbral effects such as the pluck-

ing of the piano strings. Given its substantial musical and technical content, *Three Dimensions* could also constitute an appropriate alternative 'own choice' work for the Unisa Licentiate piano examinations.

Three Dimensions has generally been neglected – I suspect the reason being that it has never been published and officially printed. I am grateful that, with the editor's consent, a copy is included in this publication. A reputable piano tutor, Prof Joseph Stanford of the University of Pretoria, shares my admiration of this work – he has taught it to several of his students. A good recording of the work by one of my former piano students, Annalien du Plessis, is featured on the EMI album, *Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph* (EMI EMCJ (A) 4061831), commercially released in 1988.

Three Dimensions is included in my own repertoire and I have frequently performed it, both locally and abroad. My performance of it at the Pretoria State Theatre elicited the following comments in Afrikaans: "*Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph se 'Drie Dimensies vir klavier' is heel eenvoudig een van die meevoerendste komposisies wat nog deur 'n Suid-Afrikaner neergepen is... Dit is opwindend om te besef dat daar 'n komponis in ons midde is wat met ware hartstog en virtuositeit vir die klavier kan komponeer*". [Translated: Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph's *Three Dimensions* for piano is simply one of the most captivating compositions for piano ever written by a South African ... It is exciting to realize that we have a composer in our midst who can compose for the piano with true passion and virtuosity] – (Paul Boekkooi, *Die Beeld*, 3 September 1988).

Structure and Style

At the juncture in her career when she wrote *Three Dimensions*, Zaidel-Rudolph says that, having been influenced by the creative work of European composers such as György Ligeti (who was later to become her composition tutor), she was in the process of freeing herself from her former preoccupation with abstract rhythmic and pitch orderings

and to re-focus on the changing tone-colours and densities of the sound itself. Timbral transformations depicting changing atmospheres and shapes became an important structural parameter of her compositional language at the stage (Interview with the composer: 05-07-2008).

The narrative goal of *Three Dimensions* appears to rest on the emotive power of the sounds themselves in their numerous and changing articulations. The juxtaposing of various sonic effects is achieved with convincing and logical coherence throughout. Conventional phrase and periodic construction has made way for building blocks of contrasting sonorities and kaleidoscopic tone colours. Carefully chosen intervals are organically transformed by means of intricate motivic and rhythmic permutations. Sound patterning frequently anticipates forthcoming structural material to lend structural unity, whilst at the same time allowing smooth transitions. The mirroring of elements between opening and closing subsections creates equilibrium and balance. The compositional style of this work is thus best described as eclectic because of the fusion of avant-garde and African stylistic traits.

Three Dimensions consists of three sections (of varying lengths) with programmatic subtitles:

A European City Awakens (Bars 1-21; 21 bars in length)

An African City Pulsates (Bars 22-83; 61 bars in length)

An Eastern City Meditates (Bars 84-105; 20 bars in length)

(Acknowledging the composer's deeply-felt patriotism towards the country of her birth, the African section, as structural nucleus, constitutes the large centre-piece of the work).

The above three subtitles have biographic origins in Zaidel-Rudolph's career. As a student in Europe, she was exposed to a multitude of new musical ideas, yet she felt herself nostalgically drawn to her African roots with their pulsating rhythms and sounds. Philosophically and spiritually, she felt a strong affinity towards Eastern beliefs and spirituality (Interview: 05-07-2008).

The free-flowing construction of the work has a unifying effect since each section calls forth the next one with growing necessity. In performance, the one section flows into the next uninterrupted. The composer says that "barlines are [only] present to aid the performer...; the music must have continuity without any emphasis..." (Composer's Notes, 1974).

Towards Interpretation

In *Three Dimensions*, a comprehension of the music's architecture will aid the performer in conveying its true character.

Because of the esoteric nature of this music, an analysis of the structural elements should not only be of a purely technical nature, but must of necessity also concentrate on the aesthetic and philosophical aspects. The performer should try to synthesize the technical and interpretative elements towards an imaginative and artistic manipulation of the composer's language and intention.

The score abounds with interpretative detail and direction. Detailed dynamic indications change frequently and border on extreme contrasts - the range varies from the *pp* at the start of the composition to the *fff* at the conclusion. In the following extracts from the score, I have added additional dynamic indications to aid in the shaping of the sound material as well as fingering suggestions to facilitate the execution of taxing technical figurations. Where the composer's pedaling indications were found to be limited, I have added my own suggestions, based on my practical experience of the work.

The European City

This opening section of the whole work is of an improvisatory nature and in a sense symbolizes the over-all construction of the work – three subsections (building-blocks) of contrasting static timbres that are announced sequentially.

The opening subsection (bars 1-7) exhibits the undulating repetition of 4-note vertical structures in contrary motion built from superimposed minor sixths. The A to A flat (descending minor second) interval plays a pivotal role in delineating motivic permutations – the initial 5-note group (bar 1) is extended by means of random accumulative techniques to a 10-note group (bars 2 and 3) to a 9-note group (bars 4 and 5) and finally, to another 10-note group.

The incessant and relentless reiterations of the patterns create a chant-like effect, almost like the far-off ringing of church bells in a generic European city.

Dynamic shading here should be very subtle and the touch should remain fairly gentle, measured and *cantando*, even during the *crescendo* in bars 6 and 7. I recommend an alternation of fifth and fourth fingers for the outer voices and some finger-changing for the inner voices to achieve the desired *legatissimo*. Frequently changed half-peddaling enhances the luminosity of the texture. The *una corda* may also be used at the outset.

In the next subsection, (bars 8-13), the sonority changes. Sudden and dramatic off-beat punctuations of dissonances trace angular melodic sounds to simulate early morning traffic. The sudden *ff* indication necessitates a *martellato* touch with *staccato* in appropriate spots (which I indicate) to outline the angularity. The pedal should be used appropriately.

The final subsection (bars 14-20), apart from providing the structural link to the “African” section, constitutes yet another change in timbre. Proportional graphic notation is used – strict bar-division is abandoned so that the performer can interpret note durations according to the visual spacing of note symbols and the horizontal length of the beams. The

music is indeterminate in time, suspending the temporal element in the piece prior to the stamping, pulsating rhythms of Africa. In an interesting contradiction it could also be heard as a philosophical preparation for the advent of Africa and its ‘timelessness’.

African City

The African-sounding section with its contagious rhythms is also divisible into various smaller subsections. The language here comprises a ritualistic style of writing; sustained muted colourations are interrupted by disjointed-sounding *staccato* patterns. Dense *ostinato* sound-layers are frequently punctuated by dissonant cross-rhythms. Structural and material manipulation guides sharply ascending pitch contours into the extreme registers of the piano. Metric divisions are extremely varied, but aggregates of twos and threes predominate as rhythmic core units.

The opening subsection features an *ostinato* rhythmic pattern in semi-quaver triplet figurations played in the upper register by both hands. The pre-eminent pitch is the E flat which serves as a metric spill-point into the following metric groupings: 5+7+9+5+5 (all larger sums of twos and threes). The irregular patternings evoke the earthy, feet-stamping and dance-like invocations of the ancestors.

The metronome indication here is the fastest of all those in the work, i.e. 152 to the quaver, which makes the triplet figurations challenging to play. With a comfortable fingering (I provide a logical pattern) and a slightly *non-legato* touch (I would suggest a very close proximity to the keyboard with a slight ‘pulling’ action in the fingertips so as to avoid excessive wrist motions), the figurations will prove easier to play.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system, starting at bar 22, is marked 'Presto' with a tempo of approximately 152. It features a complex rhythmic pattern of semi-quaver triplets in both hands, with a 'Non-legato' instruction. The second system, starting at bar 24, continues the pattern with various fingering suggestions. The third system, starting at bar 26, shows a dynamic shift from 'p' to 'pp' and includes a fermata over the final notes.

In the following subsection (bars 28-36), the stamping of a Zulu dance is simulated commencing at *pp* and building to a *ff* dynamic level. The wide interval leaps require swift lateral adjustments in contrary motion and exaggerated ‘down-up’ movements of the forearms – keep wrists extremely ‘loose’ and flexible. The short notes can almost be viewed as embellishing ornamentations. Rhythmic pedaling and a gradual *crescendo* from bar 30 onwards will enhance the climax-building to a large degree. The 10ths in bars 34 and 35 may be split to accommodate a small hand.

28 **Meno Mosso** ♩ = ca 138
 (2) (3) (5) (3) (2) (3)
 6 *pp subito* *sf*
 ↓ *ped.* (ped simile)

30 *sf* *sempre cresc.* 4

32 **Tenuto** *sfz* *p* **short**
 3 4 *ped.*

35 *sfz* *ff* 2 4

A bilinear structure that sounds typically African is found in bars 50-58. The right hand plays an undulating rhythmic pattern in a 7-note sequence in quavers and semi-quavers. The rhythmic grid causes a constant shift in placing and accentuation. Against this shifting *ostinato*, that reminds one of the sound of an Mbira¹, the left hand plays varied but larger intervallic shapes, the melodic contour of which (although rhythmically transformed), makes a direct reference to South Africa's erstwhile national anthem, *Die Stem*. This quotation was meant to be a tongue-in-cheek reference. (Interview: 05-07-2008). Little did Zaidel-Rudolph know, in 1974, that she would be the composer chosen to blend this melody with that of *Nkosi Sikilel'i Afrika* for the country's first democratic official national anthem in 1995, twenty years later!

I suggest a slightly more intense dynamic level (*mp* to *mf*) in the left hand to make the melodic contour stand out. Try half-pedaling, economically though, so as not to spoil the translucent texture. Bars 56 and 57 warrant *legato* pedaling to support the intensification of dynamic level (I prefer a *cresc* here).

The image shows a handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of three systems of staves. The first system covers bars 50 and 51. The right hand (RH) plays a dense texture of chords and moving lines, with dynamic markings *pp* and *pp* and a *cresc* (crescendo) indicated. The left hand (LH) has a melodic line with dynamic markings *mp* and *mf*, and a *legato* marking. The second system covers bars 53 and 54. The RH continues with a similar texture, and the LH has a melodic line with dynamic markings *mf* and *mf*. The third system covers bars 55 and 56. The RH has a texture with a *cresc* marking, and the LH has a melodic line with a *cresc* marking. The score includes various performance instructions such as *subito pp*, *legato*, and *half-pedaling* (indicated by arrows and brackets).

A subsection of the African section of *Three Dimensions* that is exhilarating to play and listen to, is found in bars 66 to 79. The music, at a *prestissimo* tempo, reaches a frenetic peak with a strongly driving rhythmic support. Textural activity is allotted to the right hand which plays semi-quaver patterns of fourths (a characteristic African interval) in duple subdivision in fast ascending and descending horizontal waves. The 2+2+2+2 subdivision of the first three bars (67-69) is substituted by the *hemiola*-type (3+3+2) in bars 70 and 71, with the left hand supporting the syncopation with accented triadic structures.

A carefully planned dynamic application elicits a most satisfactory result. To clarify the texture, one should play the right hand figures *non legato* throughout with very sparse use of the pedal. One should also avoid playing this section too fast as it will then lose its effectiveness. *Legato* pedaling in the final three bars (77-79) should be applied. I play the first four demi-semiquavers in bar 79 with my left hand to make the pattern clear.

65 *mp* *Cresc.* *accel. to new tempo* *Prestissimo* *mf*

69 *(piu forte)* *(1)* *(2)* *(3)* *(2)* *(3)*

73 *mp* *mf* *f*

77 *(1) f* *Adagio* *5 3 2 1 (m.s.) subito ff* *PP*

The Eastern City

The concluding section of *Three Dimensions* highlights exotic timbral effects. Proportional notation echoes the orientation of the third subsection of the *European City* section. Brief melodic motives, derived from a pentatonic Eastern scale, the *hira-joshi*, provide the pitch parameters for waves of *glissandi* and *tremolo* sounds. The plucking of the piano strings creates interesting oriental sonorities.

The *hira-joshi*

a *b* *a'*

min 2nd *maj 2nd*

maj 3rd

In the opening bars, the right hand plays the first four notes of the *hira-joshi* scale. The left hand (mutely) takes over the keys from the right hand as the right foot simultaneously depresses the pedal. The pianist then rises to reach inside the piano to pluck certain strings with the right hand fingertips, focusing on the falling major 3rd interval. This effect is best achieved on a grand piano; it can however also be executed on an upright, provided that the lid is left open during performance.

The pitches of the demi-semiquaver pattern in bar 85 constitute a transposed version of the initial 4-note motive. In bar 86, the pianist rises again to play a sweeping *glissando* on the strings. Exact pedaling is of prime importance:

III Ad libitum

84

85

86

Annotations: "pluck strings in piano", "adagio glissando on strings", "presto gliss. on strings with back of nail", "Take over held down notes with left hand senza ped.", "PPP", "P", "m.s.", "m.d.", "5/1", "5 4 3 2 1", "1 2 3 4", "5/1".

Pitch delineation throughout the entire section is based on the Eastern scale quoted above. A good example is seen in bar 95 – even though the timbre features *glissandi* from the bottom to the top registers of the piano, a reduction of octave displacements shows a direct pitch relation to the *hira-joshi*

95

Annotations: "mp", "Right Hand slow glissando", "quicker gliss.", "f", "fast gliss.", "p", "1 2 3 4 5", "5 4", "5/1", "m.s.", "Octave reduction".

The Coda of *Three Dimensions* quotes the well-known religious theme, the “Dies Irae” (E-D#-E-C#-D#-B-[C#]). Accentuation of its melodic contour comprises vertical quaver-note clusters interspersed by frenetic waves of dissonant chromatic scale *glissandi*. Philosophically speaking, this tempestuous finale points towards the final apocalypse, when all continents will be united in a final ‘dimension’. Dynamic application here is extreme (*f*, *ff* and *fff*) as this subsection represents the climactic culmination of a dramatic ending. I recommend tiny pauses (commas) between the reiterations of patters by fast releasing of the pedal.

Notes

- 1 The Mbira is an instrument where metal staves, tuned to the pentatonic scale, are attached to a resonator (usually made of wood or the dried-out hull of a halved pumpkin) to be plucked by the fingers.

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Scores:


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Discography

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THREE DIMENSIONS

For Piano

**By
Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph**

I A European City Awakens

II An African City Pulsates

III An Eastern City Meditates

THREE DIMENSIONS

Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph

$\text{♩} = 126$

pp mf

Musical notation for measures 1-5, featuring complex rhythmic patterns in both hands.

6 *accelerando e crescendo*

$\text{♩} = 88$ legato

ff quick arpeggiando

Musical notation for measures 6-9, including a section marked 'quick arpeggiando'.

10

Musical notation for measures 10-13, featuring triplets and a 5/1 interval.

14 *Ad libitum*

p pp f mp p

All notes sustained until dotted barline

Musical notation for measures 14-15, with dynamic markings and a dotted barline instruction.

16

pp *crescendo*

Musical notation for measures 16-18, including a 'crescendo' marking.

19

m.s. m.d. tremolando fff

Musical notation for measures 19-21, including 'm.s.', 'm.d.', 'tremolando', and 'fff' markings.

II Presto ♩ = ca. 152

22

mp
Non-legato

24

26

p *pp* *subito fff*

28 Meno Mosso ♩ = ca 138

pp *subito* *sf*

30

sf

32

Tenuto

short

3

4

sfz

p

8va

35

sfz

ff

2

4

p

cresc.

sf

sf

sf

8va

8va

secco senza ped.

39

ff

decresc.

5

pp

mf

bene articulando

8va

8va

43

5

left hand cantabile

5

marcato legato

♩ = ♪ = ca 104

8va

47

sim.

4

cresc. ad ff

8va

* = cluster F# G G# A A#
fingers 1 2 3 4 5

** = cluster A A# B C C#

50

5 *subito pp*

legato

53

55

59 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ *Poco piu mosso*

4 *pp* *p* *sf* *sf*

62

65

Prestissimo

Musical score for measures 65-68. The piece is marked **Prestissimo**. Measure 65 features a treble clef with a whole note chord and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes. A tempo change instruction *accel. to new tempo* is placed above the bass staff. Measure 66 continues the triplet in the bass. Measure 67 shows a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 68 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final notes of measure 68.

69

Musical score for measures 69-72. Measure 69 has a bass clef with eighth notes and a treble clef with eighth notes. Measure 70 continues with eighth notes in both staves. Measure 71 features a bass clef with eighth notes and a treble clef with eighth notes. Measure 72 has a bass clef with eighth notes and a treble clef with eighth notes.

73

Musical score for measures 73-76. Measure 73 has a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 74 continues with eighth notes in both staves. Measure 75 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 76 has a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final notes of measure 76.

77

Adagio

Musical score for measures 77-79. Measure 77 has a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 78 continues with eighth notes in both staves. Measure 79 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final notes of measure 79. The instruction *subito ff* is written below the bass staff.

80

$\text{♩} = \text{ca } 152$ (Tempo primo of II)

Marcato

Musical score for measures 80-83. Measure 80 has a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 81 continues with eighth notes in both staves. Measure 82 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 83 has a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. The instruction *simile* is written above the treble staff, and *Marcato* is written above the treble staff.

6

82

decresc.

III Ad libitum

84

8va

presto gliss. on strings with back of nail

Pluck strings in piano

adagio glissando on strings

ppp

p

m.d.

Take over held down notes with left hand senza ped.

5/1

m.s.

87

ff

p

mp

tr

m.s.

tremolo

89

m.s.

m.d.

m.s.

ff

91

pp

m.d.

tr

94

f

95

mp

Right Hand
slow glissando

f

p

gliss.

gliss.

Ped.

96

Peacefully

m.s.

m.s.

m.s.

$\text{♩} = 126$

legato

split from lowest note

Sub

100

Freely

f

ff

trem.

Sub

102

Musical score for measure 102, featuring a treble and bass clef. The treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, and the bass clef contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A piano dynamic marking is present at the beginning of the measure.

103

Musical score for measure 103, featuring a treble and bass clef. The treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, and the bass clef contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A piano dynamic marking is present at the beginning of the measure. The measure concludes with a double bar line, a fermata over the final note, and a fortissimo (fff) dynamic marking. Below the bass clef, there are handwritten annotations: "222" and "86-...".