

A New Piano Reduction for Selected Scenes from Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*

by

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## ABSTRACT

Transforming an orchestral score into a playable piano reduction is a balancing act, one that must convey the impression of a full orchestra without sacrificing clarity or playability at the keyboard. This challenge is at the core of *The Rake's Progress* piano-vocal score, one of the most notoriously demanding reductions in the operatic repertoire. Igor Stravinsky supervised its creation to bring it closer to his orchestration, yet the result is infamous for its impracticality. Its dense textures and awkward figurations often undermine playability, making it effectively impossible to play as written. As a result, every pianist must adapt large portions of the score to ensure fluency, clarity, and balance.

This research paper examines *The Rake's Progress* as a study in piano reduction, arguing that the score often prioritizes completeness over clarity, leading to collapse of textural layers and a loss of essential contrasts. Through a comparative analysis of the only published full and piano-vocal scores (Boosey & Hawkes), I identify moments where the reduction obscures the balance of transparency that underpin Stravinsky's last neoclassical work. Modeled after Mozart's operatic conventions, Stravinsky emphasizes formal clarity and distinct instrumental roles, elements that are sometimes compromised in the reduction.

Drawing on score analysis, insights from the collaborative piano literature, and practical experience as répétiteur for Arizona State University's 2023 production, this paper demonstrates how registral distribution, articulation choices, and dynamic layering

can be restructured to maintain fidelity to the orchestration while improving pianistic viability. This research builds on Martin Katz's argument that effective reductions do not merely transcribe but translate orchestral writing into idiomatic piano textures, ensuring clarity and ease for the pianist without sacrificing the most essential orchestral elements. Ultimately, this paper argues that reductions must be adaptable, and that orchestral integrity should be understood as synonymous with balance, clarity, and whenever possible, pianistic ease. By prioritizing these qualities, a reduction can remain both faithful to the score and functional for the répétiteur, reinforcing Stravinsky's aesthetic ideals without introducing unnecessary physical strain.

Due to copyright restrictions, the full reduction is not included in this document, though representative examples are presented and analyzed. The complete score will be made available once copyright expires.

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“For idle hearts and hands and minds  
The Devil finds a work to do.”  
— W. H. Auden, *The Rake’s Progress*

Thanks to all of you, he hasn’t had the chance.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF EXAMPLES .....	iv
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
2 CLASHING VOICES.....	9
3 WHY SHOULD I LABOR? .....	21
4 MISSING ELEMENTS .....	30
5 TOO MANY ELEMENTS: CREATING COMPLEXITY WITHOUT CHAOS .....	40
6 NOTATIONAL AND TEXTUAL CLARITY .....	53
7 CONCLUSION.....	65
REFERENCES .....	67
APPENDIX	
A LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	69

## LIST OF EXAMPLES

Example	Page
1. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 183 (B. & H. PV).....	11
2. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 183 (B. & H. FS) .....	12
3. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 183 (MS Edition) .....	15
4. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98-100 (B. & H. FS) .....	16
5. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98-100 (B. & H. PV) .....	17
6. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98-100 (MS Edition).....	19
7. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 101-102 (B. & H. PV) .....	22
8. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 101-102 (B. & H. FS) .....	23
9. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 101-102 (MS Edition).....	24
10. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 196-198 (B. & H. FS) .....	26
11. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 101-102 (B. & H. PV) .....	27
12. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 101-102 (MS Edition).....	29
13. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 193 (B. & H. FS) .....	30
14. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 193 (B. & H. PV).....	31
15. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 193 (MS Edition) .....	32

16. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 207 (B. & H. FS) .....	33
17. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 207 (B. & H. PV, left) (MS Edition, right).....	34
18. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98 (B. & H. FS) .....	35
19. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98 (B. & H. PV).....	36
20. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98 (MS Edition) .....	37
21. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 168 (B. & H. FS) .....	42
22. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 168 (B. & H. PV).....	43
23. Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 168 (MS Edition) .....	44
24. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 38-40 (B. & H. PV) .....	45
25. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 38-40 (MS Edition).....	47
26. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 38-40 (B. & H. FS) .....	49
27. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 42-44) (B. & H. PV) .....	50
28. Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 42-44 (MS Edition).....	52
29. Act II, Scene 3, rehearsal number 228 (B. & H. PV) .....	57
30. Act II, Scene 3, rehearsal number 228 (MS Edition).....	60
31. Act II, Scene 3, rehearsal number 157-159 (B. & H. PV) .....	61
32. Act II, Scene 3, rehearsal number 157-159 (MS Edition) .....	63

To introduce labor or uncertainty into playing orchestra music when unlimited alternate choices are acceptable would be misguided or, to be blunt, stupid ... I have found that ... when we make ourselves pianistically comfortable playing reductions, we acquire the means to sound orchestral.<sup>1</sup>

— Martin Katz

Your comment on lyricism [...] is perfectly on target, so much so that one is tempted to turn it into a generalization to be applied to all art forms: *Oui, l'art, bien que divin parce ce que soumis aux cordes, doit être astucieux et difficile.*

— Igor Stravinsky,<sup>2</sup> in a letter to Charles Albert Cingria

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* presents a particularly rich case study in the balance between fidelity to the orchestral score and the demands of pianistic execution. While Stravinsky, like many composers, relied on his publishers in preparing the piano-vocal score, letters between him and Boosey & Hawkes indicate that he remained closely involved in every stage of the process, revising the score to bring it “acoustically closer”<sup>3</sup> to his orchestration. However, despite his efforts to refine the reduction, the final score is

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Katz, *The Complete Collaborator: The Pianist as Partner* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 155.

<sup>2</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*, ed. Robert Craft, vol. III (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 114. “Yes, art, though divine because it is bound by constraints, must be both shrewd and difficult.” *Translation by the author.* Omission indicated by square brackets is my own.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

notoriously difficult to play. As Matthew Aucoin observes,<sup>4</sup> its “sadistic, finger-twisting difficulties at the piano”<sup>5</sup> make even routine rehearsal an exhausting task. Wide jumps, excessive hand crossings, and repeated notes often aim at replicating the full score to a fault, sacrificing balance and clarity, and rendering large portions of the reduction impractical for daily use. Beyond its technical demands, the reduction also presents challenges in readability, with notational conventions that obscure rather than clarify text and rhythmic structures.

A piano reduction is an essential tool in opera productions, serving as a practical stand-in for the orchestra throughout the rehearsal process. It distills the full orchestral score onto a keyboard, allowing singers, opera coaches, stage directors, and stage management to work with a more accessible representation of the music. While some individuals in these roles may consult the full score, the piano-vocal score remains the primary resource for most rehearsals due to its practicality. For non-musicians, such as stage directors and stage management, a piano-vocal score simplifies the orchestral complexity, making it easier to track musical structure and timing. For singers, it provides a clear, readable format that facilitates music rehearsals without the logistical challenge of navigating a full orchestral score. Even though many répétiteurs and vocal

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew Aucoin (b. 1990) is an American composer, conductor, and writer. A 2018 MacArthur Fellow, he has been commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Los Angeles Opera, where he served as Artist-in-Residence. His book *The Impossible Art: Adventures in Opera* explores the creative and philosophical dimensions of opera throughout history.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Aucoin, *The Impossible Art: Adventures in Opera* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021), 61.

coaches keep a full score at hand to refine their understanding of the orchestration, rehearsing directly from it is impractical. Playing from a full score requires assimilating multiple instrumental lines, clefs, and transpositions at sight, and constant page turns make it an inefficient choice. A reduction brings the orchestra into a form that is both visually and physically manageable while preserving essential harmonic and textural relationships. However, not all piano reductions achieve the right balance between orchestral fidelity and playability. Some are too sparse, failing to capture key orchestral details, while others, like *The Rake's Progress*, attempt to preserve every detail of the full score, sometimes to the detriment of playability.

Martin Katz, in *The Complete Collaborator*, argues that achieving a convincing orchestral effect at the keyboard does not require replicating every instrumental detail. Instead, a pianist should prioritize ease, strategically simplifying passages so that nothing is missing from the listener's perception.<sup>6</sup> Stravinsky's philosophy for orchestral transcription, by contrast, prioritizes piano figurations that mimic instrumental gestures, even when they result in awkward keyboard writing. Graham Griffiths argues that Stravinsky's approach to piano transcription was deeply tied to physicality, noting that "Stravinsky was intent on re-creating something of the original's rich timbral detail—and, furthermore, its visual characterization—by means other than purely pianistic."<sup>7</sup> His

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<sup>6</sup> Katz, *The Complete Collaborator*, 159.

<sup>7</sup> Graham Griffiths, *Stravinsky's Piano: Genesis of a Musical Language* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 88.

fingering choices often mimic the gestures of orchestral instruments rather than prioritizing conventional keyboard technique. Griffiths observes about one excerpt that “Stravinsky’s detailed and calculated fingering for the keyboard version [of this melody], with its arching movements up and down, lends the pianist’s right hand, wrist, and arm an uncanny resemblance to the violinist’s bowing gestures.”<sup>8</sup> More broadly, Stravinsky’s piano music is notoriously difficult, often pushing technical boundaries in ways that seem indifferent to the instrument’s natural limitations. As Mengjiao Yan notes:

This has been cited as evidence ... that Stravinsky was not an outstanding pianist, as he did not fully understand the limitations of gestures; nor did he care about the technical problem involved in playing his piano works. It has been commented that he did not use the piano to its full potential and exploit the qualities which the piano can effectively achieve.<sup>9</sup>

Yet in his correspondence with Boosey and Hawke’s editor Erwin Stein, Stravinsky asserts that his revisions to *The Rake’s Progress* piano-vocal score were intended to make it *more* pianistic:

In many instances the reduction for piano of my orchestra score was satisfactory. In other—quite a few—[cases] I had to go through an extensive overhauling of whole sections of your piano reduction. My idea in doing this has been not only to give the piano reduction a better “pianistic” cut but also (and mainly) to bring it acoustically closer to my original orchestra score.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>9</sup> Mengjiao Yan, “Stravinsky’s piano works from three distinct periods: aspects of performance and latitude of interpretation” (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 2019, 137–138).

<sup>10</sup> Stravinsky, *Selected Correspondence*, Volume III, 336.

If these revisions were intended to make the reduction *more* pianistic, it raises the question of just how unplayable the original version must have been. The letter underscores Stravinsky's concern with achieving orchestral sonorities through the piano, however pianistic ease I argue was not a priority for Stravinsky, and based on Griffith and Yan's observations, much of the difficulty in the piano-vocal score for *The Rake's Progress* may have been a deliberate feature rather than a flaw. The challenge, then, is to reconcile Stravinsky's commitment to orchestral detail with the practical needs of the pianist who must navigate long staging rehearsals, coach singers, and provide clear and flexible musical leadership.<sup>11</sup>

This research paper explores the challenges of reduction in *The Rake's Progress* through a cross analysis of the opera's only published scores: the full orchestral score (B. & H. 17853), and the piano-vocal score (B. & H. 17088), the latter prepared by Boosey editor Leopold Spinner under Stravinsky's supervision.<sup>12</sup> In addition to these scores, several recordings, including one conducted by Stravinsky,<sup>13</sup> provided valuable insight into orchestral texture, balance and articulation. This paper identifies five key problem areas that arise in the reduction process:

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen Mould, *The Sociology of the Opera House – Insiders, in Curating Opera*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2021), 136, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003031017-14>.

<sup>12</sup> Leopold Spinner (1906–80) was an Austrian-born composer who studied with Anton Webern in the 1930s before emigrating to England in 1938. He later became a longtime editor at Boosey & Hawkes, where he worked on the publication of contemporary operas and orchestral works. See Regina Busch and Inge Goodwin, "The Identity of Leopold Spinner," *Tempo*, no. 165 (1988), 24–36.

<sup>13</sup> Igor Stravinsky, cond., *The Rake's Progress*, Philharmonia Orchestra, Columbia Records, 1953, digital.

1. Preserving distinct orchestral layers without sacrificing clarity – ensuring balance and contrast among competing musical elements.
2. Sheer technical difficulty – passages that push beyond playable limits, undermining fluency and orchestral weight and color.
3. Missing elements – omissions of dynamics, articulation, or rhythmic elements that flatten the multidimensional qualities of the score.
4. Overloaded textures – moments where excessive detail obscures rather than clarifies.
5. Notational and textual clarity – engraving and beaming practices that create unnecessary visual clutter, impeding readability.

In response to the immense challenges of the published reduction, this paper proposes an alternative reduction of selected scenes from *The Rake's Progress*—one that preserves the complexity and layered textures of Stravinsky's score while maintaining relative stability and ease at the keyboard. These excerpts serve not only as case studies in rethinking Stravinsky's reduction but also as models for broader application, demonstrating techniques that can be used throughout the opera and in reductions of other orchestral works. Rather than mechanically reproducing the orchestra writing, this approach embraces simplification as a means of fidelity, recognizing that reductions are most effective when they distill complexity rather than merely condense it. As Philip Cranmer observes, "the making of [reductions] poses the same sort of problem that faces the translator of a play or poem: to retain the essential sense of the original, and at the

same time to make it sound stylish in the new language.”<sup>14</sup> By reconsidering what elements are essential to the orchestral effect, this alternative reduction aims to uphold the Mozartian ideals of balance and clarity from which this opera draws its inspiration,<sup>15</sup> while ensuring that the piano part remains playable within the practical demands of rehearsal.

### **Note on Copyright and Accessibility**

Due to ongoing copyright restrictions in the United States, the complete score of my alternative reduction of selected scenes is not included in this research paper. However, because *The Rake's Progress* entered public domain in Canada on January 1, 2022, the score is available to Canadian users. Individuals located in Canada who wish to consult or work with the reduction may contact me directly at [mshannonopera@gmail.com](mailto:mshannonopera@gmail.com) for further information, in accordance with copyright laws. Once the opera enters the public domain in other jurisdictions — including the United States, where it is expected to become public domain in 2042 — interested musicians and researchers may also contact me for access or further information.

The reduction includes the following scenes:

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Cranmer, *The Technique of Accompaniment* (London: Dobson, 1979), 46.

<sup>15</sup> Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 397.

- Prelude
- Act I, Scene 1: Duet and Trio “*The woods are green*”
- Act I, Scene 1: Recitative and Aria “*Here I stand*” / “*Since it is not by merit we rise or we fall*”
- Act I, Scene 1: Quartet “*I wished but once*”
- Act I, Scene 1: Arioso and Terzettino “*Dear Father Trulove*” / *Laughter and light*”
- Act I, Scene 2: Chorus “*With air commanding*”
- Act I, Scene 3: Recitative-Aria-Cabaletta “*No word from Tom*” / “*Quietly, night*” / “*I go, I go to him*”
- Act II, Scene 3: Aria “*As I was saying*”
- Act II, Scene 3: Recitative-Arioso-Recitative “*Awake? Who’s there?*” / “*O Nick, I’ve had the strangest dream*” / “*Forgive me, master, for intruding upon your transports*”
- Act III, Scene 1: Aria “*Who hears me, knows me*”

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## CHAPTER 2

### CLASHING VOICES

One of the greatest challenges in piano reduction is preserving the distinct layers of an orchestral texture without overcrowding the hands or sacrificing clarity. When multiple musical elements occupy the same register, they risk blending together in ways that obscure their individual functions. In the orchestra, instruments with contrasting timbres can remain separate even when playing in the same range, but on the piano, where every sound is produced by the same mechanism, careful redistribution is necessary to maintain balance. These challenges are particularly evident in Anne Trulove's cavatina Act I, Scene 2, where, at rehearsal number 183 the published reduction disrupts the balance between the bass line, the solo bassoon melody, and the accompanying string figures. The original version frequently eliminates bass octaves in the LH to allow the bassoon line to be played there instead, while the RH covers the upper strings. However, this approach obscures the distinction between the bass and the solo line and shifts too much weight to the RH, causing the string accompaniment to dominate the texture rather than support it. The orchestration in this passage is inherently stratified—the bass provides harmonic grounding, the bassoon delivers the primary melodic content that echoes and dialogues with Anne's vocal line, and the strings serve as a rhythmic motor, underscoring Anne's anxious state of mind. Stravinsky's choice to pair Anne with the bassoon is significant. As Heather Wiebe observes, Anne is persistently shadowed by woodwinds throughout the opera, reinforcing her connection to

the pastoral world even as she ventures beyond it.<sup>16</sup> In “Quietly, night”, the bassoon does not simply accompany Anne but entwines itself with her melody, blurring the distinction between voice and instrument. The published reduction, however, distorts this relationship. By shifting the bassoon line entirely into the LH, it becomes more accompanimental than independent, diminishing its dialogue with Anne and weakening Stravinsky’s carefully layered texture.

The published piano-vocal score attempts to address this stratification by temporarily introducing a third staff, visually separating the bass, solo bassoon, and string accompaniment. While this helps clarify the distinct layers on the page, preventing the bassoon line from getting lost within the string part, it does not solve the underlying

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<sup>16</sup> Heather Wiebe, “The Rake’s Progress as Opera Museum,” *The Opera Quarterly* 25, no. 1–2 (Winter-Spring 2009): 16.

problem. When played on the piano, there's not enough timbral differentiation between the bassoon and the strings in the same register, causing the two to compete.

Distinguishing the solo bassoon from overlapping string figures creates too much timbral competition when played on piano.

Placing the solo bassoon in the LH disrupts the continuity of bass line. Third staff separates layers only visually, not timbrally.

The image shows two systems of musical notation. System 183, titled 'Aria', features a vocal line with lyrics: 'Qui - - et ly, night, O find him and / Stil - - le der Nacht, o steh trö - stend'. Below the vocal line is a piano accompaniment with a 'p' dynamic marking. A blue arrow points to a complex string figure in the right hand, a red arrow points to a bassoon line in the left hand, and a green arrow points to a 'sim.' marking. System 184, titled 'Arie', features a vocal line with lyrics: 'ca - ress, And may thou qui - - et find His heart, / ihm bei! Mögst ru - - hig fin - - den du sein Herz,'. Below the vocal line is a piano accompaniment.

Example 1. Igor Stravinsky, The Rake's Progress, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 183 (B. & H. PV).

Orchestration has three distinct layers:  
cello/bass foundation, string accompaniment  
and solo bassoon

Bassoon and strings in the same register  
is no issue due to the bassoon's reedy  
timbre

### ARIA

The image displays a musical score for rehearsal number 183, starting at measure 112 and ending at measure 108. The score includes vocal parts and an orchestral arrangement. The vocal parts are for the Bassoon (Fag. I) and the Actor (A.). The orchestral parts include Violin I (Vl. I), Violin II (Vl. II), Viola (Vla.), Voice (Vo.), and Contrabass (Cb.).

Rehearsal number 183 is marked at the beginning of the score. The vocal line for the Actor (A.) includes the lyrics: "Qui - et - ly, night, O find - him - and". The vocal line for the Bassoon (Fag. I) is marked "SOLO" and "dolce-lamentevole".

The orchestral parts are marked with a dynamic of *p* (piano). The string parts (Vl. I, Vl. II, Vla., Vo., Cb.) are highlighted in green, and the woodwind parts (Fag. I, A.) are highlighted in red. The woodwind parts are marked with a dynamic of *p* (piano).

Rehearsal number 184 is marked at the beginning of the second system. The vocal line for the Actor (A.) includes the lyrics: "ca - ress, And may thou qui - et find - his heart, - al - though".

B. & H. 47853

**Example 2.** Igor Stravinsky *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 183 (B. & H. FS).

My revised approach reestablishes the correct hierarchy of elements. By keeping the bass line fully intact in octaves in the LH, the reduction preserves harmonic and structural stability. The bassoon line is reassigned primarily to the RH, but to prevent overcrowding or excessive weight in the accompaniment, I selectively omit certain notes in the upper strings where they compete in the same register as the solo bassoon.<sup>17</sup> This approach allows the essential structure to remain clear. The bass and melody serve as the foundation of the texture, while the strings subtly fill in the background. The result is a more transparent realization that aligns more closely with Stravinsky's orchestration.


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<sup>17</sup> Katz, *The Complete Collaborator*, 154.

Aria


183  $\text{♩} = 108-112$

A. 

A. 

184

A. 

A. 

**Example 3.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 183 (MS Edition).

A similar challenge emerges in the Act 1, Scene 1 terzettino “Laughter and Light,” where the first bassoon, entering three measures after rehearsal number 98, provides brief lyrical counterpoints to Tom Rakewell’s vocal line. In the orchestration, the bassoon’s distinct reedy timbre contrasts the lightness of the strings. However, in the published reduction, the bassoon line is entirely omitted until the end of the second measure after rehearsal number 99, and then delayed again by two eighth notes. Furthermore, since the passage falls in the same register as the surrounding strings, the contrast is completely lost even with expert voicing.

TERZETTINO

98 ♩ = 60

Fig. I

Rakewell  
(aside) *more. in p*

Laugh-ter and light \_\_\_\_\_ and all charmsthaten - dear, All that daz-les or dins,

98

I  
VI. *p ma marc.*  
II *p ma marc.*  
Vla. *p ma marc.*  
Vo. *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*  
Cb. *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

99

Fig. I

Anne (aside)  
Heart \_\_\_\_\_

R. *spicc.*

99

I *spicc.*  
VI. *spicc.*  
II *spicc.*  
Vla. *arco* *spicc.*  
Vo. *arco* *spicc.*  
Cb. *arco* *spicc.*

Wis-dom and wit shall a - dorn the ca-reer of him who can play and who wins,

Example 4. Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98–100 (B. & H. FS).

First arrow indicates where the bassoon solo is supposed to start, but is missing from the published reduction

♩ = 60

98 Tom (aside)  
(für sich)  
marc. in p

Laugh-ter and light, and all charms that en dear, All that daz-les or dins,  
La-chen und Licht, je-der Reiz, der er-freut, was uns glit-zernd um-spinnt,

p ma marc.

99 Anne (aside)  
Ann (für sich) 100

Heart, you are hap-  
Herz, du bist glück

Wis-dom and wit shall a-dorn the ca-reer Of him who can play and who wins, who  
Wis-sen und Geist gibt zum Weg das Ge-leit nur dem, der ris-kiert und ge-winnt. Nur

Second arrow indicates the where the published reduction brings in the bassoon line.

**Example 5.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98–100 (B. & H. PV).

To correct this, I have clearly defined the solo bassoon's entrance, selectively omitting certain accompanimental string pitches to maintain its clarity while ensuring the accompaniment remains supportive rather than intrusive. By simplifying the

accompaniment in these measures, I allow the solo bassoon to be well differentiated as a solo instrument, more accurately reflecting the orchestration.

Solo bassoon line incorporated, reducing strings to improve timbral balance on piano

Terzettino

98  $\text{♩} = 60$  *marc. in p*

R. (aside) Laugh - ter and light, \_\_\_\_\_ and all charms that en - dear, All that

*p ma marc.*

99

R. daz - zles or dins, Wis - dom and wit shall a - dorn the ca - reer Of

(aside) 100

A. Heart, \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_ are hap - py, yet why,

R. him who can play and who wins, \_\_\_\_\_ who can play \_\_\_\_\_

Timing of second entrance corrected

Example 6. Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98–100 (MS Edition).

As these examples illustrate, a piano reduction is not simply a compressed version of the orchestral score, it is a careful reconstruction of its musical hierarchy. This is particularly crucial where the neo-classical style of *The Rake's Progress* depends on strong contrasts between musical layers. Essential relationships such as bass, melody, countermelody, and accompaniment must be maintained for the texture to function effectively. However, on the piano, when a solo instrument and the accompaniment occupy the same pitch range, the timbral contrast that exists in the orchestra can easily become blurred. This is particularly important when a solo instrument is engaged in musical dialogue with a singer. By judiciously thinning the background, the reduction brings these layers into clearer focus, ensuring that the solo instrument/voices are heard and properly supported.

## CHAPTER 3

### WHY SHOULD I LABOR?

Differentiating musical hierarchy is crucial to preserving the interplay of voices and instruments in the trio “Laughter and Light,” but clarity can also be compromised when sheer technical difficulty overwhelms the pianist’s ability to execute the passage effectively. This becomes especially evident at rehearsal number 101, where three distinct elements—flute offbeats, a rhythmic ostinato in the upper strings, and a separate pizzicato ostinato in the cellos and basses—are all competing for attention in the piano reduction. Besides being technically impractical due to wide, awkward leaps in both hands simultaneously, the Boosey reduction fails to effectively separate these layers, resulting in a texturally cluttered and rhythmically ambiguous realization that lacks the clarity of the orchestral version.

Boosey edition puts winds in RH, cello and bass in LH, and tries to split upper strings between both hands.

Three measures after rehearsal 101, things become problematic with terribly awkward leaps, especially when trying to preserve the octaves of the cello and bass parts in LH

101

signs?  
rührt?

wins, who  
wimmt, nur  
(aside)  
(für sich)

For - tune so  
Wem es For.

102

A. Why, why, why should a tear Dim our  
Sag, sag, was in der Freud macht, daß die

T. can play and who wins, and  
wer wagt, der ge-winnt, der

Tr. swift and so ea - sy, I fear, May on - ly en - cou - rage his sins, may on - ly en -  
tu - - na zu leicht gibt, der scheut zu-rück nicht vor Lok - kung und Sünd, zu-rück nicht vor

1. 2.

A. joy-ous de- joy-ous de-si  
Trä-ne mir Trä-ne mir

T. who who  
ge- ge-

Tr. cou-rage his sins. -cou-rage his  
Lockung und Sünd! Lockung und!

Example 7. Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 101–102 (B. & H. PV).

**101**

Ob. I, II  
Cl. I, II  
in Sib

A.  
-signs? why, why, why should a

R.  
wins, who can play and

Tr.  
For - tune so swift and so ea - sy, I fear, may on - ly en -

I  
VI.  
II

Vla.

Vo.

Cb.

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for rehearsal number 101. It includes staves for woodwinds (Ob. I, II; Cl. I, II in Sib), vocal parts (A. and R.), trumpet (Tr.), and strings (I, VI, II, Vla., Vo., Cb.). The vocal lines have lyrics: "wins, who can play and" and "For - tune so swift and so ea - sy, I fear, may on - ly en -". The instrumental parts are color-coded: woodwinds in blue, strings in green, and voice in red.

**102**

Ob. I, II

I  
Cl. in Sib  
II

A.  
tear dim our joy - ous de - joy - ous de -

R.  
who wins, and who who

Tr.  
.cou - rage his sins, may on - ly en - cou - rage his sins, -cou - rage his

I  
VI.  
II

Vla.

Vo.

Cb.

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for rehearsal number 102. It includes staves for woodwinds (Ob. I, II; Cl. in Sib I, II), vocal parts (A. and R.), trumpet (Tr.), and strings (I, VI, II, Vla., Vo., Cb.). The vocal lines have lyrics: "tear dim our joy - ous de - joy - ous de -", "who wins, and who who", and ".cou - rage his sins, may on - ly en - cou - rage his sins, -cou - rage his". The instrumental parts are color-coded: woodwinds in blue, strings in green, and voice in red.

B. & H. 17858

Example 8. Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 101-102 (B. & H. FS).

In my revision, I ensure that each of the three elements retains its distinct placement in the hands, preserving their function without collapsing into a single, undifferentiated texture. The flute offbeats and the upper string ostinato are assigned to the RH while the bass and cello pizzicato remain in the LH to preserve the clarity of their hemiola-based pattern. As an added bonus, I am also able to bring a brief viola line into the left hand in the third measure after rehearsal number 101, ensuring the distinct chromatic descent is not lost. This approach not only clarifies the individual instrumental lines but also reinforces their interplay, ensuring the rhythmic structure remains intact.

101

A. -sings? Why, why, why should a

R. wins, who can play and

T. (aside)  
For - tune so swift and so ea - sy, I fear, May on - ly en -

102

A. tear Dim our joy - ous de - joy - ous de -

R. who wins, and who who

T. - cou - rage his sins, may on - ly en - cou - rage his sins. cou - rage his

**Example 9.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 101–102 (MS Edition).

In this last excerpt, the challenge lay in coordinating distinct layers within the reduction. However, technical difficulty in reductions is not always a matter of managing multiple elements at once; sometimes, a single instrumental figure presents a unique challenge when transcribed to the keyboard. One such passage occurs in Anne Trulove's cabaletta in Act I, Scene 2, at rehearsal number 196, where the first violin part features a continuous sixteenth note figure with repeated notes — highly idiomatic for strings but awkward when adapted for piano. Although many collaborative pianists may never play the entirety of *The Rake's Progress*, most will encounter this cabaletta in auditions, either as an audition pianist or when auditioning themselves as an apprentice coach at a young artist program. Having a version they can play confidently, rather than one that forces them to wrestle against these awkward figures, is essential. In the orchestration, the passage works effectively due to the lightness and agility possible with the bow.

196

Fag. I, II

Tr. I  
in Sib

Cor. I, II  
in F#

A.

-not de - sert; Though it be

VI. I

VI. II

Vie.

Vc.

Cb.

197

Ob. I, II

Fag. I, II

A.

shunned or be for - got - ten, though it be

VI. I

VI. II

Vie.

Vc.

Cb.

198

Ob. I, II

Fag. I, II

A.

hurt if love be love, it will not

VI. I

VI. II

Vie.

Vc.

Cb.

B. & H. 47853

**Example 10.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 196–198 (B. & H. FS).

However, when transcribed directly to the piano, the repeated notes become an endurance test which can begin to sound mechanical and heavy, drawing undue attention to a figure that should support rather than dominate.

196  
 A. Though it be shunned. Or be for - -  
 Ist sie ver - - schmäht, ist sie ver - -

197  
 A. - got - - - ten, Though it be hurt, If  
 - ges - - - sen, ist sie auch wund, die

198  
 A. Love be love It will not  
 Lie - be kann nicht, darf nicht

Fast repeated notes transcribed to piano can easily sound labored and dominate texture

2nd violin/viola dotted rhythm in small notes not possible at real octave

**Example 11.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 196–198 (B. & H. PV).

Following Katz’s suggestion of “replacing busy with busy,”<sup>18</sup> my solution is to replace the repeated notes with alternating sixths, preserving the rhythmic energy of the figure while preventing it from sounding percussive or cumbersome. This preserves the essential profile of the gesture, saves me from developing any tension in the wrist and forearm, and allows me to focus on the more important dialoguing between the strings in the treble and bass. However, at rehearsal number 197 when this same gesture opens with a minor seventh instead of a major sixth, other problems emerge. If I intend to use the same fingering as before, the 2–5 combination that worked seamlessly for the sixth now becomes an uncomfortable stretch. More importantly, as the interval widens, the chosen solution starts to call undue attention to itself. My solution in this case is to replace the repeated notes with neighboring tones, ensuring that the phrase remains fluid and expressive. Additionally, with my right hand less taxed, I can restore the dotted rhythms of the violas and second violins one measure after rehearsal number 197 in the LH — a detail I was asked to include by the conductor during rehearsals for a 2023 production at Arizona State University. In my reduction, I have placed the second violin and viola figure (originally played an octave apart on B<sub>5</sub>-G<sub>5</sub> and B<sub>4</sub>-G<sub>4</sub>) at B<sub>3</sub>-G<sub>3</sub> in the LH. Since this figure primarily serves as rhythmic punctuation and happens to fit comfortably in the LH, this placement allows me to maintain the stability of the first violin’s sixteenth note motor without any disruption.

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<sup>18</sup> Katz, *The Complete Collaborator*, 192.

196

A. 
  
Though it be shunned

A. 
  
or be forgotten,

197

A. 
  
though it be hurt if

A. 
  
love be

Replacing **busy** with **busy**  
is more comfortable *and*  
more orchestral

Allows me to add the  
punctuating dotted rhythm  
of **2nd violins/viola**

**Example 12.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 196–198 (MS Edition).

## CHAPTER 4

### MISSING ELEMENTS

The technical challenges of Anne Trulove's cabaletta at the end of Act I are well known; every pianist who encounters it is aware of its demanding passagework. Less often recognized are the missing structural, rhythmic and dynamic layers that give depth and stability to this music. At rehearsal number 193, the published piano-vocal reduction presents a version of the first measure that alters the weight and articulation found in the orchestral score, affecting both harmonic grounding and rhythmic drive.

**CABALETTA**

193

♩:126

Fl. I, II

Fag. I, II

Tr. I  
in Eb

Cor. I, II  
in F

I

VI. I

VI. II

Vcl.

Cb.

**Example 13.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 193 (B. & H. FS).

Lack of sustained bass flattens  
layered orchestration

Trumpets and horns should  
begin on the downbeat

**Example 14.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 193 (B. & H. PV).

While the initial triple stop played by the cello is included, the sustaining C in the bass and bassoon is not. This omission weakens the harmonic foundation, as the listener perceives only the initial attack of the chord rather than the continuous resonance that provides depth and stability in the sound. Without the sustained bass, the higher Cs on beat three played by the flutes and upper strings have nothing to respond to, weakening Anne's "strengthened resolve." Additionally, the trumpet and horn accompaniment that sets the rhythmic drive in motion from the downbeat is delayed by an eighth in the published reduction.

In my revision, I realign all elements of the downbeat so that the bass sustains properly while the right hand plays the initial trumpet and horn chords. However, adding the sustained low C introduces another problem – that of pedaling. If the damper pedal is depressed for the full duration of the note, the crisp articulation of the violins and brass is compromised. Using the sostenuto pedal could potentially work, but at a fast tempo, the risk of it failing is high. Still, a complete sustain may not be necessary. Even holding the

C for one measure with subtle damper pedal depression can provide enough resonance to suggest the duality of crisp and sustained and sustained articulations. Since pedaling is such an individualized art, I include the full duration of the note in my reduction as an invitation for pianists to experiment with their own “smoke-in-mirrors” pedaling solutions. Without at least some degree of sustain in the bass, the passage lacks the necessary depth and momentum, creating an ineffective impression of orchestral weight and impetus.

Sustained bass and bassoon restored

Trumpets and horns now begin on downbeat

Cabaletta

The image shows a musical score for rehearsal number 193, titled 'Cabaletta'. The score is in 2/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 126. The piano part (treble clef) starts with a blue highlight on the first measure, marked 'sub. meno f'. The bassoon part (bass clef) starts with a red highlight on the first measure, marked 'sf'. The piano part features a series of triplets and a final measure marked 'p sub.'. The bassoon part features a series of triplets and a final measure marked 'f'. The score is annotated with a red line and a bracket under the bassoon part, indicating the sustained bass and bassoon restoration.

**Example 15.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake’s Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 193 (MS Edition).

At rehearsal number 207, the orchestration relies on fast contrasts of dynamics, accent, and orchestral weight to launch into Anne’s triumph of will that defines the end of Act I.<sup>19</sup> The strings play a single *sforzando* eighth note, the basses and bassoons sustain a

<sup>19</sup> Chandler Carter, *The Last Opera: The Rake’s Progress in the Life of Stravinsky and Sung Drama* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 7.

long note with an initial *fp* attack, and the brass plays a series of eight notes, the first *forte* and the rest *piano*. The published reduction, however, collapses all these layers into a single dynamic marking, flattening the contrast and misrepresenting the weight distribution among instrument groups. My revised version restores the brass forte-piano shift, as well as the missing bass and bassoon (see also Example 15), ensuring that the dynamic interplay between instrument groups remains intact.

The image shows a musical score for rehearsal number 207. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with the following parts from top to bottom:

- Ob. I
- Fag. I, II
- Tr. I in *S<sup>b</sup>*
- Cor. I, II in *F<sup>a</sup>*
- A. (Alto)
- I. VI. (Violins I and II)
- VIe. (Viola)
- Vo. (Vocals)
- Cb. (Cello)

The vocal line (A.) has the lyrics: "it shall not mat - ter What he may - be." The score includes dynamic markings such as *fp*, *f*, and *p*. A box labeled "207" is placed above the first staff of the woodwinds and above the vocal line. The publisher's information "B. & H. 17853" is printed at the bottom center of the score.

**Example 16.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 207 (B. & H. FS).

Brass should be marked *piano* here

Missing low sustained C for  
bass and bassoon

All elements restored

A.

207

A.

207

**Example 17.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 207 (B. & H. PV on left) (MS Edition on right).

Stravinsky was meticulous with his dynamic markings. While excessive nuance in a reduction can be overwhelming, it is crucial to maintain the fundamental balance of instrumental forces. When these contrasts are omitted, the reduction loses the clarity and structural precision that define the work's neo-classical aesthetic.

While the omission of certain dynamics in Anne Trulove’s cabaletta compromises structural balance, the Act I, Scene 1 trio “Laughter and Light” reveals a different kind of omission: missing articulations that flatten rhythmic vitality and interplay. Stravinsky’s writing demands a delicate equilibrium between varied articulations, textures, and rhythms. Within the first two measures of the trio alone we encounter *staccato*, *legato*, *portato*, *tenuto*, and *marcato* articulations, as well as a contrast between *arco* and *pizzicato*. Bringing all these elements together requires meticulous effort, yet the resulting orchestral effect should be charming, effortless, and transparent.


First two measures feature:  
*staccato*, *legato*, *portato*, *tenuto*,  
 and *marcato* (articulations)  
 + *pizzicato* and *arco*  
 strings

TERZETTINO

Example 18. Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake’s Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98 (B. & H. FS).

The published reduction maintains all these markings, except for the *portato* of the violins and viola as indicated in the full score.

Missing *portato* in the upper strings



**Example 19.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98 (B. & H. PV).

Though small, this omission significantly impacts the character of the trio, where Stravinsky's music and Auden's words exert as Matthew Aucoin describes as "reciprocal pressure"<sup>20</sup> on each other. Firstly, Stravinsky sets the first line of text at rehearsal number 98 to match the natural prosodic lilt of the English—an unusual choice for him, as he typically resists aligning the words of this opera with natural speech rhythms.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, throughout the trio, he writes pizzicato quarter notes for the cellos basses resulting in hemiolas against the vocal line. And lastly, the contrast between *staccato* and *portato* in the violins and violas provides a subtle emphasis on the second eighth note of each

<sup>20</sup> Matthew Aucoin, "On Music and Language," accessed February 25, 2025, <https://matthewaucoin.com/on-music-and-language/>.

<sup>21</sup> Aucoin, *The Impossible Art*, 78.

measure, creating a nuanced rhythmic tension. Collectively, these elements result in metrical accents on five out six beats per measure. Stravinsky’s meticulous layering of articulation, metric displacement, and texture ensures that no single element dominates.

Terzettino

98  $\text{♩} = 60$  *marc. in p*

R. (aside) Laugh - ter and light. — and all charms that en - dear, All that

*p ma marc.*

R. dazz - les or dins,

Red indicating stress on primary beats.

Other colors indicating stress on secondary beats

Orchestral rhythm and articulation put  
“reciprocal pressure”  
against natural stress of the words

The image displays a musical score for rehearsal number 98 from Igor Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. It features a vocal line (R.) and a piano accompaniment (p). The score is in 6/8 time with a tempo of quarter note = 60. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "(aside) Laugh - ter and light. — and all charms that en - dear, All that dazz - les or dins,". The piano accompaniment is marked *p ma marc.*. The score is annotated with color-coded boxes: red boxes indicate primary stresses on the words, while blue, green, and purple boxes indicate secondary stresses. A callout box explains that red indicates stress on primary beats and other colors indicate stress on secondary beats. Another callout box notes that the orchestral rhythm and articulation create a "reciprocal pressure" against the natural stress of the words.

**Example 20.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake’s Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 98 (MS Edition).

Instead, the friction between them generates an underlying energy that propels the trio forward. As Matthew Aucoin observes, Stravinsky “exerts much steady friction on the sharply hewn firewood of Auden’s text that the whole thing bursts brilliantly into flame.”<sup>22</sup> Without the *portato* articulation, however, the upper strings align in accent and

<sup>22</sup> Aucoin, *The Impossible Art*, 78.

articulation with Tom's vocal line, potentially transforming restrained and eager anticipation of a charmed life in London into a premature victory.

### **A Note on Missing Mezzo-Staccato Markings in the Piano-Vocal Score**

In the same letter where Stravinsky instructs Erwin Stein to bring the piano-vocal reduction "acoustically closer" to the orchestra score, he then paradoxically directs Stein to remove all mezzo-staccato markings: "Please also remove the signs [mezzo-staccato]<sup>23</sup> [wherever] they appear in your vocal score. I use these signs to get a sharp though light start of instruments (especially strings) in the orchestra score; but in the vocal score it looks rather odd and I am afraid nobody would understand it."<sup>24</sup>

The contradiction is striking. Stravinsky was meticulous about articulation in his orchestration, yet here he dismisses a marking that contributes directly to the clarity and precision in sound. His own recording reinforces the execution of these figures which are played with the sharp and light attack he describes.<sup>25</sup> If our goal as custodians of the full score at the piano is to convey the orchestral character as faithfully as possible, then markings that may seem unconventional in a keyboard score should be adapted rather than erased. Rather than omitting these indications, I have reinstated them where their absence weakens clarity. In my revised reductions, mezzo-staccato has been restored in several moments: in the Act I, Scene 1 quartet at the beginning of the string figures at

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<sup>23</sup> .

<sup>24</sup> Stravinsky, *Selected Correspondence*, Volume III, 336.

<sup>25</sup> Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, recording.

rehearsal number 58; throughout Anne Trulove's Act I, Scene 3 scene "No word from Tom"; in the winds in Act II, Scene 3 at rehearsal numbers 176 and 185; and again throughout beginning with the first horn after rehearsal number 197.

## CHAPTER 5

### TOO MANY ELEMENTS: CREATING COMPLEXITY WITHOUT CHAOS

Just as a reduction can feel thin and incomplete when key elements are missing, it can become equally problematic when too many important competing voices are forced into a single texture. A good reduction isn't about playing everything; it's about knowing what to leave out so that it feels like nothing is missing. As Martin Katz notes, when faced with three or more simultaneous elements, the pianist must either eliminate the least important or "revise an important element which she feels can most easily wear a disguise."<sup>26</sup> In these moments, the challenge is not simply compression, but illusion—reshaping the material so the ear is convinced that everything is present. Nowhere is this more crucial than in the Act I, scene 2 "Lanterloo" chorus, where Stravinsky's dense polyrhythmic layering demands a reduction that sounds orchestral without overwhelming the pianist's hands.

This lilting mock nursery rhyme ballad<sup>27</sup> recalls another famous scene from an opera about a rake: Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. In the famous party scene from the Act I finale, Mozart ingeniously layers three dance meters simultaneously, creating a rich rhythmic interplay.<sup>28</sup> While Stravinsky does not have three small bands plus the full orchestra playing at once, the Lanterloo chorus achieves a similar festive energy through

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<sup>26</sup> Katz, *The Complete Collaborator*, 224.

<sup>27</sup> Willard Spiegelman, "The Rake's Progress: An Operatic Version of Pastoral," *Southwest Review* 63, no. 1 (Winter 1978), 32.

<sup>28</sup> Wye J. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 246.

polyrhythmic layering of simultaneous dance gestures. At rehearsal number 168, he introduces three primary rhythmic elements: a pizzicato hemiola figure in the basses, cellos, and violas that align with the chorus tenors and basses; trilled figures in the second violins emphasizing subdivided beats two and five; sixteenth notes in the first violins grouped in threes by articulation; and trumpet and oboe figures that accentuate primary beats one and two.

102

168

Fl. I, II

Oboe I, II

Clarinet in A, Bb I, II

Bassoon I, II

Trumpet I, II

Trombone I, II

Tenor, Bass

Chorus

Violin I, II

Viola

Voice

Cello

Tr. I, II

Cor. I, II

Soprano

Tenore

Basso

Chorus

They go a - walking, What do they see?

B. & H. 17863

**Example 21.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 168 (B. & H. FS).

In the published reduction, only two elements are represented: the lower strings' pizzicato hemiola in the L.H. and the first violin figure in the RH, with an ossia staff above containing the oboe figure.

168

Tenori  
Bassi

They go a - - wal-king. What do  
Sie gehn spa - - zie-ren. Was zie

Soprani  
Alti

they see? Alti  
sollt schau'n?

An al - ma - nack in a wal - nut tree. —  
Ein Buch an et - - nem Wai - nuss - baum. —

ff sub.

stim.

**Example 22.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 168 (B. & H. PV).

Beyond the fact that the first violin passage translates awkwardly to the keyboard, this solution fails to capture the broader rhythmic energy of the passage. With so many rhythmic elements occurring simultaneously, the listener's attention is naturally drawn to different layers at different moments, rather than perceiving the entire texture equally at once. Composer Arnold Schoenberg compared orchestration to sculpture, arguing that while orchestration is meant to be experienced from multiple angles, a piano reduction, by contrast, must prioritize a single, well-defined viewpoint.<sup>29</sup> My revised reduction preserves all of the elements, but redistributes them strategically to maintain clarity,

<sup>29</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 349.

ensuring that each rhythmic gesture is present, even if not all are played at the same time. I preserve the left-hand pizzicato figures while integrating the trumpets and both violin parts into a rhythmically cohesive and playable figure that better reflects the passage's overall drive.

My reduction maintains **viola/cello/bass** hemiola in L.H.  
R.H. combines **violin 1**, **violin 2**, and **trumpet** gestures

168  
*sempre sf*

T. B. They go a -

S. A. An al - ma -

T. B. - wal - king. What do they see?

*f* *ff* *f* *tr* *tr* *f* *ff*

**Example 23.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 168 (MS Edition).

While the “Lanterloo” chorus challenges the pianist with overlapping rhythmic layers, the *fugato* section in Tom’s Act I, Scene 1 aria, presents a challenge of contrapuntal density, where the range of imitative counterpoint pushes past what is possible between two hands. The published reduction acknowledges these limitations by using small notes to indicate optional omissions where the span would be unplayable. However, their inclusion contributes to visual overload, making it difficult to recognize the most essential material.

Small notes acknowledge handspan limits but are included for completeness

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, starting at rehearsal mark 38, features a vocal line (soprano) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "vain. Till I die, then of fe - ver Or\_ by light-ning am - plagt. Bis ich dann sterb am Fie - ber, ein Fall bricht mein Ge -". The piano part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The second system, starting at rehearsal mark 39 and ending at 40, continues the vocal line with lyrics: "struck, Let me live by my wits And trust to my luck, and - nick. Ich ver - trau mei - nem Kopf und bau auf mein Glück, und". The piano accompaniment continues with complex rhythmic patterns. In both systems, small green rectangular boxes highlight specific notes in the piano part that are identified as optional omissions due to handspan limitations.

**Example 24.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake’s Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 38–40 (B. & H. PV).

To navigate these challenges in my reduction, I prioritize subject entrances, ensuring that the beginning of each statement is clearly heard. Even if the entire subject cannot be sustained, the ear will naturally complete the musical idea once the entrance is established.<sup>30</sup> I also retain the bass and cello line for structural support.

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<sup>30</sup> Lars Riecke, A. John van Opstal, and Elia Formisano, “The Auditory Continuity Illusion: A Parametric Investigation and Filter Model,” *Perception & Psychophysics* 70, no. 1 (2008), 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.3758/PP.70.1.1>.

Prioritizing the beginning of subject material keeps structure clear and hands comfortable

Prioritizing bass and cello instead of ornamental bassoon keeps structure clear

38

R. vain. Till I die, then of

*mf* *more.*

39

R. fe - ver Or by light - ning am struck, Let me live by my wits And

*sim.*

40

R. trust to my luck, and trust to my luck.

*f*

**Example 25.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 2, rehearsal number 38–40 (MS Edition).

A study of the full score further reveals that after the bassoon's subject entrance at rehearsal number 38, its role becomes more ornamental. Omitting it except at a few choice moments of incidental harmony simplifies execution. And since the orchestration

here is light, (a wind band along with strings playing *spiccato* and *pizzicato*) thinning out some material in this section contributes to more buoyancy and better character overall. However, while these revisions alleviate some of the passage's more cumbersome elements, it remains technically demanding and will still require careful practice. As Katz reminds us, with a well-crafted reduction, it is possible to maintain relative pianistic comfort without ignoring the "legitimate challenges" that preserve the character and musical integrity of the music.



A second issue arises two measures before rehearsal number 43, where the reduction attempts to combine the highest and lowest elements of the sixteenth note *staccato* figure—namely, the flute and second violins—into a single R.H. figure, making the passage unnecessarily difficult to execute. At the same time, the published reduction shortens the sustained bass and cello line to accommodate the inner bassoon parts, weakening both the harmonic support and rhythmic framework.

Combining flute and 2nd violin in R.H. creates awkward figure at tempo

The image displays a musical score for rehearsal numbers 42-44. The top system (rehearsal 42) features a vocal line with lyrics: "life lies before me, The world is so wide: Come, wi-shes, / Le-ben liegt vor mir. Die Welt ist so weit: Kommt, Wün-sche,". The piano accompaniment includes a complex sixteenth-note figure in the right hand, highlighted in green. The bottom system (rehearsals 43-44) features a vocal line with lyrics: "be hor-ses; This beg-gar shall ride, this / seid Pferde, daß ich auf euch reit, daß". The piano accompaniment shows a reduction of the string rhythm to block chords in rehearsal 43, highlighted in red, and a fortissimo (ff) section in rehearsal 44.

B. & H. edition reduces faster rhythm in strings to block chord eighth notes, stopping momentum at the climax

**Example 27.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 42–44 (B. & H. PV).

To address these issues, I bring the sixteenth note material down, favoring the lower octave in the orchestration, and redistribute some of it into the L.H. to ease the technical obstacles in the R.H. This approach restores the necessary bass support while maintaining clarity and playability. Ironically, just as the reduction struggles with awkward figurations and too many notes leading up to rehearsal number 43, it immediately suffers from the opposite problem. Two measures later, where the built-up momentum reaches its peak, the strings explode into *fortissimo* double-stop sixteenth note triplets. However, the published reduction flattens this climactic moment into block eighth note chords, killing the rhythmic drive at its most crucial point. Perhaps the only instance in the entire reduction where too few notes are used rather than too many, this passage highlights how an overly cautious approach can be just as disruptive as an overly dense one. When experimenting with solutions, I found that simply reintegrating the sixteenth note triplets was unsatisfactory. On the piano, they draw too much attention to themselves and lack the brilliance they possess in the context of the orchestra. I began exploring tremolos, broken arpeggios, and rolled chords, but ultimately, descending thirty second note broken chords proved to be the most effective solution. While this is not the notated rhythm in the full score, Katz notes that sweeping orchestral passages, when translated to the keyboard, sometimes fail to achieve their intended “wash” effect unless the figure is replaced with notes that are faster than those originally written.<sup>31</sup> In an ironic reversal of the reductions usual tendencies, I found that effectively capturing the orchestral energy required *adding* more notes than are in the full score. My approach

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<sup>31</sup> Katz, *The Complete Collaborator*, 213.

preserves the energy of the moment, provides support for the tenor during his extended high A, and remains idiomatic to the piano.

42

R. world is so wide: Come, wishes, be

43

R. hor - ses; This beg - gar shall ride,

R.

- Bringing R.H. figure down the octave and redistributing in middle voice is more comfortable and sounds more effective
- Representing longer bass/cello as written differentiates from middle voice material
- Fast descending broken chords in R.H. and block chords in L.H. gives a truer impression of orchestral effect

**Example 28.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act I, Scene 1, rehearsal number 42–44 (MS Edition).

## CHAPTER 6

### NOTATIONAL AND TEXTUAL CLARITY

The Boosey & Hawkes piano-vocal score of *The Rake's Progress* presents significant readability challenges due to visual overcrowding, excessive textual content, and outdated beaming practices in the vocal line. The engraving choices in this edition do not always prioritize clarity for singers or pianists, leading to a score that slows down comprehension and complicates the alignment of text and rhythm.

One of the most prominent issues is the inclusion of the German translation beneath the English text in italics. While justified from a practical standpoint for publishers, this extra layer adds visual complexity that competes for the performer's attention. Stravinsky himself was aware of these issues and, in a letter to Rayner Heppenstall Bean at Boosey and Hawkes on October 13, 1950, expressed concern over how multiple translations could clutter a vocal score:

As a composer of music for a definite text with definite words and syllables, I know that it is impossible to make a translation of the original text without losing most of the musical links between the words or syllables and notes. To avoid this, it would be necessary to re-write the music according to each translated text ... I can only assure you that whenever the singer's part in the vocal score is made of a piling up of translations (see Mavra score) it becomes so hard to read for the singers in all the other lines in excess of two that practically nothing useful can come out of it.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Stravinsky, *Selected Correspondence*, Volume III, 335.

Stravinsky's solution was to allow only the German translation in the piano-vocal score, given its similarity to English, while suggesting that the Italian and French translations be printed separately. Although his argument makes sense from a linguistic standpoint, the presence of even one additional translation in italics beneath the English in the Boosey & Hawkes edition contributes to an already dense visual field. As a result, the eye must work harder to differentiate text from music, particularly in ensemble passages where multiple lines of text are already stacked together. Additionally, opera in translation is increasingly rare, due in part to the introduction of surtitles by the Canadian Opera Company in 1983. Today, even the Komische Oper in Berlin, an institution that has long prioritized performing operas in German, programmed *The Rake's Progress* in English as recently as 2020.<sup>33</sup>

Stravinsky's sensitivity to score clarity extended beyond just translations. In a later letter, he criticized the engraving quality of the full score, emphasizing that excessive density led to misreading of note values. He writes: "Another great inconvenience to the conductor comes from the engraving itself, which is so dense that it makes the eighths, especially in recitatives, look exactly like sixteens."<sup>34</sup> This engraving issue affects how performers visually process rhythm—a problem compounded in the vocal score by outdated syllabic beaming. The adherence to traditional syllabic beaming practices for vocal music, in which each syllable receives a separate flagged note, breaks

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<sup>33</sup> *Operabase*, "The Rake's Progress, Stravinsky, Komische Oper Berlin (2020)" accessed March 15, 2025, <https://www.operabase.com/productions/the-rakes-progress-116344/en>.

<sup>34</sup> Stravinsky, *Selected Correspondence*, Volume III, 363.

the natural phrasing of a musical line. While this was the engraving standard at the time of the opera's publication – and is still practiced by some today – it complicates rhythmic readability and creates unnecessary visual interruptions, particularly in passages with frequent sixteenth notes.

Elaine Gould, in *Behind Bars*, discusses how this historical beaming approach persisted well into the twentieth century, despite its drawbacks:

Until well into the twentieth century, a separate tail was used for each syllable in vocal music, and notes within a beat were beamed only to indicate that a syllable took more than one note. In syllabic setting, this notation makes all but the simplest rhythms difficult to read, a problem compounded by the fact that text underlay often distorts note-spacing. Instrumental beaming (i.e. beaming into beats) is now used in vocal music together with syllabic slurs<sup>35</sup>

The engraving of *The Rake's Progress* score follows these older conventions, meaning that in rapid passages, the vocal line is fragmented by excessive beaming breaks, making it harder for the singer to visually track the pulse of the measure. By contrast, beat-based beaming (as is standard in instrumental notation) allows for a clearer sense of phrasing and metric organization.

The separate flags of syllabic beaming are especially problematic in recitative, where speech-like rhythms require fluid phrasing. Because recitative is set more syllabically by nature, separate flags create unnecessary visual clutter and disrupts the natural pacing of the text. Instead of reinforcing the flexibility of speech rhythms, it artificially fragments the line, making it harder for the singer to maintain fluency. Beat-based beaming not only improves rhythmic readability but also visually reinforces the

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<sup>35</sup> Elaine Gould, *Behind Bars: The Definitive Guide to Music Notation* (London: Faber Music, 2011), 435.

organic flow of spoken language. The following recitative example from Act II, Scene 3 demonstrates this issue in the Boosey & Hawkes edition, followed by my revised version, which beams by beat.



228

Recitative

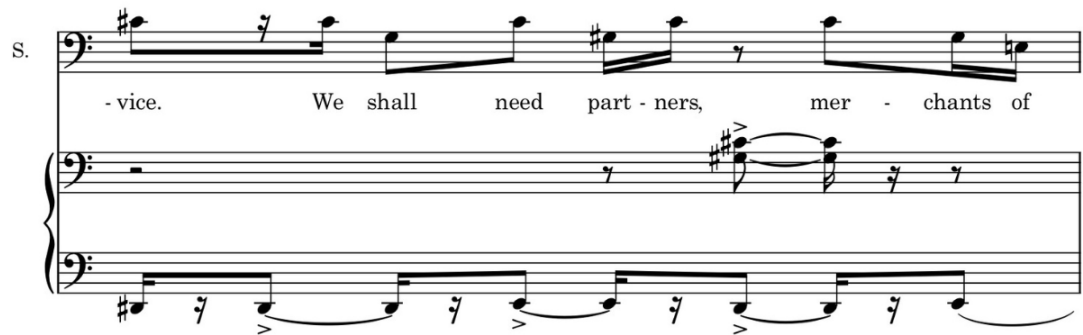
S.

S.

S.

S. 
  
great quan - ti - ties. It must be ad - ver -

S. 
  
- tised, it must be sold. We shall need mo - ney and ad -

S. 
  
- vice. We shall need part - ners, mer - chants of

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system features a Soprano (S.) line and a Tenor (R.) line. The Soprano line has lyrics: "A - las, good Sha - dow, your ad - mo pro - bi - ty and re - pu - ta - tion in the Ci - ty." The Tenor line has lyrics: "- ni - tions are on - ly too just; and they chill my spi - rit. For who am I,". Below the vocal lines is a piano accompaniment consisting of two staves. The second system continues the vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The lyrics for the Soprano line are: "A - las, good Sha - dow, your ad - mo pro - bi - ty and re - pu - ta - tion in the Ci - ty." and for the Tenor line: "- ni - tions are on - ly too just; and they chill my spi - rit. For who am I,". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves.

**Example 30.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act II, Scene 3, rehearsal number 228 (MS Edition). Beat-based beaming reinforces phrasing of the text, providing visual clarity that aligns with larger sentence structures.

The same issue arises in Baba the Turk's aria in Act II, Scene 3, where the vocal line is also syllabic in setting. However, in this case, syllabic beaming presents additional problem: the singer must navigate an ongoing orchestral accompaniment with clear rhythmic subdivisions. In the Boosey & Hawkes edition, syllabic beaming disrupts readability just as it does the recitative, but it also makes it harder for the singer to see how their part aligns with the orchestra. By contrast, the beat-based beaming in my edition not only improves visual clarity but also allows the singer to track metric alignment more easily.

(Tom and Baba are sitting at breakfast, the former sulking, the latter breathlessly chattering.)  
 (Tom und Baba sitzen beim Frühstück, er in schlechter Laune und sie atemlos fortplappernd.)

Baba 157

As I was say-ing both bro-thers wore mou-sta-ches,  
 Wie ich schon sag-te, tru-gen bei-de Brü-der Bär-le.

But Sir John was tal-ler; they gave me the mu-si-cal glas-ses. That  
 Doch Sir John war schlan-ker; er ließ mir das Glas-kla-vier bau-en. Ich

158  
 was in Vien-na, no, it must have been Mi-lan Be-cause of the donkeys. Vien-na  
 glaub, in Wien war's. Nein, in Mai-land war es wohl, von we-gen der E-sel. Und der

159  
 was the Chi-nese fan— Or was it the bottle of wa-ter from the Ri-ver Jor-dan?  
 Fächer stammt aus Wien. Nein, viel-leicht war's auch die Fla-sche dort mit Jor-dan-was-ser.

**Example 31.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act II, Scene 3, rehearsal number 157–159 (B. & H. PV). Syllabic beaming in the vocal line, when juxtaposed with beat-based beaming in the accompaniment, obscures alignment between singer and orchestra.

156

CURTAIN

Rakewell and Baba sitting at breakfast.

The former sulking, the latter breathlessly chattering **Baba**

B.

As

157

B.

I was say - ing both bro - thers wore mou - sta - ches. But Sir John was

158

B.

tal - ler; they gave me the mu - si - cal glas - ses. That was in Vien - na, no,

B. ♩ = ♪

it must have been Mi - lan Be - cause of the don - keys Vien - na

159

B.

was the Chi - nese fan Or was it the bottle of wa - ter

160 ♩ = ♪

B.

from the Ri - ver Jor - dan? I'm cer - tain at least it was Vien - na

**Example 32.** Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, Act II, Scene 3, rehearsal number 156–160 (MS Edition). Beat-based beaming in both voice and accompaniment enhances readability and vertical coordination.

Stravinsky's own concerns about notation clarity, text overcrowding, and rhythmic misinterpretation justify a reconsideration of the text and engraving choices in the published piano-vocal score. While the inclusion of the German translation followed Stravinsky's own recommendation, its visual placement beneath the English text in italics further complicates an already dense score. Additionally, the historical practice of syllabic flagging in the vocal line, contributes to unnecessary fragmentation of the music. By rethinking both text and beaming practices, this reduction prioritizes clarity and functionality while aligning with the spirit of Stravinsky's priorities and intentions.

CHAPTER 7  
CONCLUSION

The published piano-vocal score of *The Rake's Progress* is both painstakingly revised under Stravinsky's supervision and famously impractical for rehearsal. Despite his goal of bringing the reduction "acoustically closer" to the orchestration, the result is a score that prioritizes completeness over something idiomatic to the keyboard. While attempting to bring the diverse elements of the full score together, the result is a reduction that lacks clarity and structural balance, overwhelms the pianist with competing layers, or omits essential articulation and dynamic details.

Because Stravinsky had significant involvement in the reduction, it may seem more difficult to justify making changes. But as Philip Cranmer observes, "if the maker of a piano reduction can play the piano, he will probably have reduced the orchestral score into a form which is convenient to his shape of hand ... It does not follow that it will be convenient for others."<sup>36</sup> Stravinsky, too, sought a reduction that preserved the integrity of his orchestration, yet his approach — however meticulous — remains tied to his own technical sensibilities rather than the varied needs of those who must perform it. His reduction embodies an ideal, but one that often demands reconsideration in practice.

Rather than positioning this alternative reduction as a corrective to Stravinsky's vision, it follows a different path — one that prioritizes playability while preserving the balance, contrast, and structure that are fundamental to the piece. Even when a composer

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<sup>36</sup> Cranmer, *The Technique of Accompaniment*, 46.

has had a hand in the piano reduction, it remains the répétiteur's responsibility to honor the full score as the primary source, rather than treating the piano-vocal version as infallible. This challenge is not unique to *The Rake's Progress*. Other composer-supervised reductions, such as those for Copland's *Clarinet Concerto*, Berg's opera *Wozzeck*, and several scores by Samuel Barber, contain similarly unplayable passages that demand intervention. Every pianist who approaches a reduction must reconcile what is possible with what is effective, shaping the score through their own expertise, physicality, and interpretive choices. A more idiomatic reduction not only enables greater ease at the keyboard but also facilitates more effective rehearsals. With less focus on their own physical limitations, the répétiteur can be a more collaborative partner in the room, keeping their eyes on the conductor and ears on the singers, ensuring flexibility, responsiveness, and a stronger connection between all musicians. When the reduction supports rather than impedes the rehearsal process, the music itself can take precedence, leading to more secure and cohesive performances.

This alternative reduction is not meant to be definitive but rather one possible approach — an invitation to further adaptation, exploration, and creative dialogue. The joy of crafting a successful reduction lies in moving beyond the notes on the page and entering a space where imagination takes the lead. And the more we, as pianists, share our imaginative solutions, the richer our collective understanding becomes of how orchestral textures can come alive at the keyboard.

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APPENDIX A  
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### INSTRUMENTATION

bn – bassoon

br – brass

cem – cembalo

cl – clarinet

db – double bass

fl – flute

hn – horn

pz – pizzicato

str – strings

tpt – trumpet

vla – viola

vlc – cello

vln – violin

ww – woodwinds

### OTHER

LH – left hand

RH – right hand

### EDITIONS

B. & H. FS – Boosey & Hawkes full  
score

B. & H. PV – Boosey & Hawkes piano-  
vocal score

MS Edition – Michael Shannon piano-  
vocal score