

# How To

## Explore the Score

BY SUZANNE W. GUY

### About the Composer

Vladimir Rebikov (1866–1920) delighted in writing miniatures for elementary and intermediate students as well as more complex advanced piano pieces. His works show the influence of Debussy's impressionism, primarily through the use of overlapping pedal which blurred harmonies and melody tones. Rebikov's early works show the influence of Tchaikovsky's orchestral colors.

### About the Piece

This is one of those mood pieces that plays best in the imagination. The patterns are easy and memorable despite the crowding of the hands as they operate in piggyback position (the left hand above and invariably brushing the right hand). Once you have “mapped” your way through *In the Forest*, try playing it early or late in the day, at dusk or at dawn when natural light is fading or emerging. Forget fingers and the keyboard; instead, listen to the sounds you create, remembering that one's sound is an extension of personal ideas and feelings.

### Something's Missing

Do you suppose the composer forgot the time signature? And where are the barlines? At first, you may feel lost in this “forest” of notes, but soon you will sense a feeling of 4/4 meter, strongly implied by the slurred left-hand broken chords and pentatonic groupings. The “missing” time signature and absent barlines contribute to the seamless, timeless quality of the piece. Sing or speak the following sample lyric (goes with the first line) and create a mood from another world, perhaps an undiscovered forested planet.

Lost in space, not a trace, Can be found,  
Slower pace, never race, Savor sound.

Feel the lilt of the implied 4/4 meter, letting the absence of the bar lines create a freedom to your interpretation. Once the left hand is shaped over the F<sup>♯</sup> major triad (“set and forget”), concentrate totally on the right-hand melody. This piece is about contrast: black keys and white keys; predictability (left hand) and improvisation (right hand); staying still and moving around. The treble melody plays all around the C major scale, either stepping or skipping. See how quickly you can memorize such a patterned composition.

## In the Forest

VLADIMIR REBIKOV  
(1866–1920)

*Allegretto* (♩ = ca. 96)

The musical score for "In the Forest" is presented in four systems. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff. The first system is marked *mp* and *p*. The second system is marked *cresc.*. The third system is marked *mf*. The fourth system is marked *dim.*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingerings.

### Something's Strange

The observant student will immediately notice the double treble staves; indeed, the lowest pitch is middle C, and the range is barely an octave and a half. The black and white keys are divided equally between the hands—all black for the left hand, and only white for the right hand. The inevitable bitonal effect (when the hands play together) is what “gray” might sound like.

### Overview

What is the form or shape of this piece? Look for what's alike and what's different, the primary clue to its organization. There are nine systems (lines of notation), and no two are identical. However, the similarities and patterns throughout serve as anchors for both learning and memorizing. Notice that the left

hand plays only three notes (an F# Major broken triad) for seven of the nine systems. Its other function is to outline a pentatonic scale on C#. Now you know everything you need to know about the left hand.

Let's explore the right hand's role, first checking for contrast to the predictable left hand. While the left hand stays still, the right hand moves. And where the left hand seems static, the right hand improvises. The upper treble melody skips and steps all around the C Major scale, frequently in a ♩ ♩ pattern.

### Pedal Effects

In a piece like this, the skillful use of the right and left pedals is equivalent to having four hands! I would suggest liberal use of the damper pedal as marked in the score. Experiment with dif-

ferent levels of pedal (no need to "floor" it), changing at the implied half measure, as you listen to the clashing colors of black and white keys. The second diminuendo (a text indication) at the end of the piece would benefit from the *una corda* pedal. At first glance, the performer might fault the composer for being so stingy with dynamic indications. Why not delight in the opportunity to fire up the imagination and use additional shadings? Imitate the play of dappled sunlight in a dense forest by carefully gauging a note-by-note crescendo.

### Handings

Everyone is familiar with the concept of fingering, but I often refer to "handings" as a learning tool, memory aid, technical assist, and all-around time saver! A pianist's hand is similar to a dancer's foot, in that choreography is equally critical. All motion at the keyboard must be planned for maximum ease and efficiency. The more notes that you can group or "bunch", the better.

- ◆ First system (G Major broken triad) is the first handing. The next seven notes all belong to a different handing). Practice each handing as a harmonic unit—all bunched together.
- ◆ Second system (alternate handings of two notes: 1-3 and 2-4), going up the C scale, with the last group of four notes, D-E-F-G in a single handing.

Note: Handing is not quite the same as blocking, which is usually reserved for broken chords played as a solid unit.

### Tempo

Rebikov allowed for a tempo range (perhaps ♩ = 80–100), depending on whether we want a leisurely stroll or a quick trip through the forest. Whatever the pace, there is a natural reluctance at the journey's end. In the last system the eighth notes disappear, and the pace slows as rests appear for the first time. ■■■

From *Focus on Melody*, Volume 1, pp. 62, 63

Selected and Edited by Suzanne Guy and Victoria McArthur