The Lotus Pond by Gamal Abdel-Rahim

Notes by James Turnbull

About Gamal Abdel-Rahim

- Egyptian composer (1924–1988), born and raised in Cairo.
- Studied music in Cairo, then in Germany (Heidelberg and Freiburg). He returned to Egypt in 1971
- Founded the first composition department at the Cairo Conservatoire
- He integrated traditional *maqamat* (modal systems) with 20th Century Western compositional techniques
- He has been referred to as "the Bartók of Egypt" for blending folk and classical idioms
- His use of *maqamat* creates modal harmonies that are rarely found in standard oboe repertoire

About The Lotus Pond

- Composed in 1977
- Originally written for flute or oboe (with violin as an alternative)
- Lyrical, mysterious atmosphere
- Makes use of Egyptian modal melodies and folk-inspired motifs
- Highlights dialogue between oboe and piano
- Combines freedom in phrasing with rhythmic precision

Aspects of Interpretation

- Trills: begin on the written note
- No repeat is required at end of bar 52
- Octave Placement:
  - Bars 9–13: Oboe plays as written; flute/violin would go up an octave here
  - Same applies at for the entry going into Figure C, bars 25–26 and the entry into bar 34
  - Final entry: Play this as written (middle octave). The *ossia* for octave leap on final C♯ is fine, if the student would prefer to use it.

Technique

- Finger Tension: be aware that for some students the fast passages may cause increased tension in the fingers, wrists or arms. Encourage light finger pressure and an awareness of tension in hands, wrists, arms.
- Air Stream & Embouchure: The legato passages benefit from keeping air stream consistent and balancing the embouchure against this carefully.
- High notes: these can cause increased throat or jaw tension in some students. Some useful strategies to counter this are to focus on a relaxed and dropped jaw. Also keeping focus on a very relaxed ‘in’ breathe helps. If the student uses short fingerings, using additional fingerings in the right hand to make longer fingerings should stabilise the pitch.

Teaching Ideas

Bar Number/Section	Information
Opening to Figure C	Emphasise legato and singing tone. A small amount of rubato could be used in bars 7-11 to bring out the sense of mystery.
Bars 16-17	The Oboe and Piano are in unison here so important to keep in time
Figure C (from bar 25)	Practice without grace notes initially. Build slowly from the back of bar 25 Watch out for F♯s, C♯s, and final B♯ Rhythmic flexibility is needed in this section for the *poco rubato*
Bar 27	Practice this slowly at first with main focus on keeping air stream fast and lip pressure adjusted accordingly for the high notes.
Bar 29	The high C♯ can often be sharp - use a long fingering if needed and relax jaw to keep pitch stable Check tuning of the following entry too
Bar 31	Practice runs starting from final note and build backward Non-standard scale—requires careful note-by-note work
Bar 33	This is likely to be the most challenging bar for students. Practice this in groups of 4 Demi-semiquavers and then groups of 8 Focus on the joins of each group for example practice 5th-13th note as well as notes 1-9
Bars 36-37	In the long C♯ notes be aware of the piano part moving underneath. Count carefully and coordinate with piano part
Bar 42 (figure E)	This is a return to the legato and lyrical section from the opening Keep focus on clean finger movement for smooth phrasing and legato Keep fingers very close to keys and curved to increase precision