

*To Alison*

# The Cheese Stands Still

Five Piano Pieces for Beginners

## John Beckwith

**Piano Score**

Program Notes by the Composer, as a letter to his granddaughter, Alison:

2 June 2002

Dear Alison:

Did you receive the book I sent, the one about the goat in the rug? I would be interested to know how you liked it. Kathleen and I went to a Navajo village a few weeks ago and looked at some beautiful woven rugs. We thought they were so fine we bought two to take home with us!

I think of you often. Lately I remembered that you have a birthday coming up, and I also remembered that you were learning to play the piano. So, I composed these little pieces which I hope you will learn. They are not very hard.

The title "The Cheese Stands Still" comes from a singing game which you and your friends have probably played. The words are those of the last verse of the song. In my pieces it's your hands that stand still, instead of moving around the keys as in most piano music.

The "Cheese" part reminded me of two little mice who used to come to have lunch at my house every week. We would get out the cheese cutter and the tin box with the plaid cover containing five different kinds of crackers, and a plate with five different kinds of cheese. I remembered five favorite kinds; you and Juliet can probably remember more than that. Then there would be some fresh fruit or maybe some ice cream. Once you said to me, "Grandad, do you ever have a normal lunch?" I asked what you meant by "normal," and you said "well, like soup or pasta." But my lunches are still mostly of the cheese, crackers, and fruit kind.

Here are some things you might think of when you play my pieces. In every piece you place your five fingers on a group of five white notes according to the fingering I have indicated. You will find that both thumbs are always on a note with the same name. You will also find that the middle fingers sometimes have to change from a white note to a black note. The idea of that is to make the tunes a little more interesting and also to give you practice in recognizing the signs  $\sharp$ ,  $b$  and  $\natural$ -which I'm sure you already know.

No.1. This is a conversation between a high voice (right hand) and a low voice (left hand). Maybe you could try singing the voices, since I know your singing at sight is very good. It's only at the very end that they sing together.

No.2. There is a nice melody in the right hand (you might try singing that too) and the left hand part is in a pattern that repeats over and over. I think you can discover the pattern easily. This means the left hand should be quieter so that we can hear the nice melody in the right. The last bar is the only place where you leave your regular position of the left hand, just for one note.

No.3. This is also a conversation between two voices, although you could also think of it as one voice shared between the two hands. In this piece, your two thumbs are on the same key, and towards the end they play a kind of drum rhythm on that key.

No.4. Here the two voices always go in the opposite direction to each other, so that you play with the same finger in each hand all the way. If No.3 was rather frisky, No.4 is rather solemn.

No.5. This is the only piece where you play chords. Maybe you want to learn the chords first, and listen to what kind of chords they are. Another thing: you have to be sure all three notes in each chord are equally loud. The piece doesn't really end; it just sort of fades out.

I will be seeing you in a couple of weeks. Perhaps we can talk about these pieces then, or you can play them for me (?). If you don't like them, I want you to tell me. Of course I hope you do like them, but I'm used to hearing that my music is unusual compared to older music and sometimes takes a little getting used to.

Meanwhile, Alison, I hope your birthday celebration is a lot of fun.

With many hugs and kisses,

Love,

Grandad

**The Farmer in the Dell** is one of the oldest and most known Nursery Rhymes. There is also a singing game based on it. The Oxford Dictionary defines “dell” as a small valley, usually among trees.

The farmer in the dell  
The farmer in the dell  
Heigh-ho, the derry-o  
The farmer in the dell

The farmer takes a wife  
The farmer takes a wife  
Heigh-ho, the derry-o  
The farmer takes a wife

The wife takes the child  
The wife takes the child  
Heigh-ho, the derry-o  
The wife takes the child

The child takes the nurse  
The child takes the nurse  
Heigh-ho, the derry-o  
The child takes the nurse

The nurse takes the cow  
The nurse takes the cow  
Heigh-ho, the derry-o  
The nurse takes the cow

The cow takes the dog  
The cow takes the dog  
Heigh-ho, the derry-o  
The cow takes the dog

The dog takes the cat  
The dog takes the cat  
Heigh-ho, the derry-o  
The dog takes the cat

The cat takes the mouse  
The cat takes the mouse  
Heigh-ho, the derry-o  
The cat takes the mouse

The mouse takes the cheese  
The mouse takes the cheese  
Heigh-ho, the derry-o  
The mouse takes the cheese

The cheese stands still  
The cheese stands still  
Heigh-ho, the derry-o  
The cheese stands still

## Composer Biography:

John Beckwith, composer, music educator, and writer, was born in Victoria, British Columbia, in 1927. He received his musical education in Toronto (1945-50) and Paris (1950-52). He was associated with the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, from 1952, serving as dean 1970 -77 and as first director of its Institute for Canadian Music from 1985 until his early retirement in 1990.

His more than 160 compositions include four operas, a dozen orchestral works, chamber and solo works, songs, and works for chorus. In an active career of over sixty years, his music has attracted commissions and performances by leading ensembles and solo artists. Most of his major instrumental, choral, and vocal works are available on compact disc and on internet listening sources.

Beckwith has edited or co edited ten books, including volumes 5 and 18 of The Canadian Musical Heritage. He is the author of Music Papers: articles and talks by a Canadian composer, 1961-1994 (Ottawa, 1997), In search of Alberto Guerrero (Waterloo, 2006), and Unheard Of: Memoirs of a Canadian Composer (Waterloo, 2012). He is a former music columnist and reviewer for the Toronto Star and script writer and program planner for CBC Radio, and has contributed articles and reviews to musical journals in Canada, Britain, and the United States.

He is a member of the Order of Canada, holds honorary degrees from five Canadian universities, and is an honorary member of the Canadian University Music Society and the Société québécoise de recherche en musique. He received the Canadian Music Council “Composer of the Year” award (1984), the Toronto Arts Award for music (1994), the diplôme d’honneur of the Canadian Conference of the Arts (1996), the “Friends of Canadian Music” award (2010), and the SOCAN Foundation Award of Excellence for Research in Canadian Music (2014).

[revised 2017]

Visit his website at: [www.individual.utoronto.ca/John\\_Beckwith/](http://www.individual.utoronto.ca/John_Beckwith/)

## Timings:

1. 0.30”
  2. 0.30”
  3. 0.25”
  4. 0.35”
  5. 0.40”
- 2’ 40” Total

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**1. Brie**

The musical score for "1. Brie" is written in 2/4 time and consists of four systems of music. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a first fingering (1) above the first note. The second system starts at measure 8 and includes a second fingering (2) above the first note of the second measure. The third system starts at measure 15 and includes a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking. The fourth system starts at measure 22. The score features a mix of quarter and eighth notes, often beamed together, and includes various phrasing slurs and ties. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4.

## 2. Cream

*p*

5

2

7

13

## 3. Goat

*mp*

2

1

1

6

3

11

*f*

*mp*