



We know that intonation is all about shifting and hand-shapes, and Joan's collection of exercises is simple in conception, concise, and absolutely focused on developing confidence and reliability when moving around the cello.

It is worth buying this book just to read and learn from her own Preface to the exercises. So much wisdom and experience is there on just one page!

Just as we encourage our students to pay absolute attention to detail, we should also give that attention to every word in the preface...and we will be all the better for it!

Joan was a founder member of ESTA, and to mark the 30th anniversary of her death a new edition of "Freedom of the Fingerboard" has been published, with proceeds from sales going to the Joan Dickson Chamber Music Fund, administered by the ESTA Bursary Committee.

James Halsey

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## Clan, A Narrative Piece for Viola and Piano

by Joanna Borrett

This set of 10 pieces was originally written for cello and piano and the direct transcription up one octave onto the viola works well. Pianist Martin Holford and I thoroughly enjoyed exploring it and were in agreement that they would work well in performance either as selections of two or three movements or as a complete cycle.

The Scottish idioms were pleasing and effective, building to the depiction of a battle,

and in its aftermath the poignant combination of a well-known tune with the opening theme brings the work to a close. The special effects were great fun, particularly the 'drum-beat' tapping on the instruments, both viola and piano, and movement 9 where the viola strums and hums the melody with a single line on the piano was very moving, although in the viola part the vocal line and words were very small and it wasn't entirely clear whether the pianist was meant to hum or sing too.

The edition says these pieces are suitable for grade 4-5 level players and above and I would broadly agree with that although some movements will be more stretching. It was Martin's view that the piano part is well written but not suitable for an intermediate standard pianist. A competent pianist would be needed for performance and careful preparation would be necessary. The parts are clear and well presented but we did pick up some errors which need to be addressed.

In Movement 2, for example, when we were playing through I exclaimed about the viola part being too low in treble clef and when we looked at the pianist's copy we saw that it was correctly in alto clef there, but wrong in the viola part. This is a simple error easily rectified but there is also a general issue with the 'rule of thumb' about clefs on viola not being known.

Generally speaking violists are not used to reading in treble clef below around A above middle C or in alto clef about around D a 9th above middle C so one example in this piece is the end of movement 4 where the last four notes need to be in treble and a shift to treble clef on the D in the third last bar would be much better.

These small points aside, this is a lovely set of pieces and a great addition to the viola repertoire.

Brenda Stewart

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