

# Battle for Freedom—Rebellion

## Pandemonium

An ambitious decision for certain, to take works on a scale of “Battle for Freedom” and “Rebellion” and arrange them for solo piano. The arrangement does a good job on a whole of creating enough sound to keep the pieces voracious, and uses tremolo effectively to keep things interesting on the less than sustain filled piano. I think the “Rebellion” segments of the piece are far more effective, and suited to piano than the “Battle for Freedom” segments, especially since the treatment of “Rebellion” here deals with the more identifiable aspects of the piece. Its dotted rhythmic figure against the tripletized melody is very recognizable and is the basis of the original composition. It is treated well in this piece, and the development of this idea throughout the arrangement was what grabbed my ear more often than not.

The “Battle for Freedom” segments didn’t catch my attention nearly as much. This is partially because the piece doesn’t mesh with the piano nearly as well as “Rebellion” but mostly because the real meat of the piece doesn’t make it into the arrangement. Most of the “Battle for Freedom” material comes from the first two minutes of the original, and none of it really feels like the things that define “Battle for Freedom” as “Battle for Freedom”. It has some beautiful ideas and is a great lead-in to the bulk of the piece, but doesn’t really feel like the piece to me. I think having more of the melodic material from “Battle for Freedom”’s later segments would have helped to assert “Battle for Freedom”’s identity in this arrangement more.

As far as technical matters go, a few things caught my attention that interrupted the continuity of the listening to me. In measures 91—94, sitting on the dominant chord feels like an awful lot of dominant for these two pieces and I feel the new section could have been announced more subtly, and in a way more suited to the moods of the two pieces. In measure 138, the rhythm in the bass is quite awkward sounding and would be difficult to play. I think even just a sixteenth note on beat three would make it easier to play and sound more appealing. I think the transition back to the main “Rebellion” theme would be smoother if there were only one bar of the D fifths as opposed to two. In 189, it again sounds weird to have the bass drop out like it does after the triplet. Finally, the descending chromatic scale toward the end is just too much scale in one direction with too much of a static rhythm.

Those are all pretty minor negatives, they just happened to catch my attention as I was listening, and I thought I might make mention of them. The real thing that gets me is the length of the piece. 12 minutes is a lot of time for one piece, particularly a piano solo, and I thought there were a lot of parts that dragged. I think this piece would be more enjoyable if it were an arrangement solely of “Rebellion” as I really found myself getting into the piece as you were working with “Rebellion” but felt a powerful drag whenever “Battle for Freedom” was involved. Focusing on “Rebellion” would save time in transitions, cut out material that didn’t really feel forward moving to me, and keep the most interesting aspect of your arrangement at the forefront at all times.

Technique:	8/10
Musicality:	8/10
Personal Tilt:	9/10
Overall:	83%

# Penelo's Theme

altoboy291

This is a nice arrangement in a more popular style than most in this contest, and with a nice ensemble. Good to see some saxophone love. I liked how you were able to stretch out the A melody with some variation and adding your own B section and didn't introduce the original's B section until about a minute and a half into the piece as your own C section. I would have liked to see more done with that theme as you just stated it and forgot about it for the rest of the piece. I liked a lot of what you did with the A section though, and while some of the accompaniment parts felt a little boring or awkward to me, I thought you did some nice things with the theme and think the whole piece does a good job of building toward the conclusion.

Here are a few specific things that jumped out at me as a little odd. In measures 8 and 9, the little run in the bassoon, alto, and soprano sax I think would be more effective if you stopped it with a staccato eighth on the A as opposed to coming back down to the F. I think the violin in measure 17 ought to sustain its D, because it really feels like it wants to go up, and if you sustain it before going down to the A it will make it feel even more deliberate that you bring it back down and feel less like the ascending line just got caught. In measure 59, a lot of the runs moving into measure 60 don't end on the downbeat of measure 60. I think that even if you don't want to keep the lines going, it would be better to end them with a staccato eighth on measure 60 as otherwise they feel quite awkward, both to play and to hear. Also, your choice to bring the melody up to a close at the A instead of coming down to the F would work if you at least once play (probably toward the end) the melody as it was in the song, coming down to the F instead of going up to the A. That way it feels like you're setting that pitch up to resolve throughout the song, and you finally let it come to rest at the end.

Still, it was a very nice listen. A bit of work to lock the secondary parts and the primary parts together more, cleaning up a few of the things I mentioned, and perhaps more development of the song's B section would have helped make this even better. Still, it was a very enjoyable piece!

Technique:	7/10
Musicality:	8/10
Personal Tilt:	8/10
Overall:	76%

# Penelo's Theme

## Conqueso

This is an interesting take on “Penelo’s Theme”. The jazzy harmonies suit the playful theme but give the piece its own lounge-esque atmosphere. I think it would have been nice to have a few more consonant harmonies, or even just a thinner texture now and again to help bring out the melody with more clarity and let the ears rest a bit. The dissonance does a good job of adding jazz flavour keeping the piece feel like it has to move forward, but sometimes veils the melody itself. It’s never to a point where the melody is recognizable, I just sometimes want the primary plane to assert itself a little bit more. It’s more toward the beginning and at measure 82 than anywhere else, as the melody clearly shines on its own in the middle.

Only other complaints I have is that the section from measures 15—26 doesn’t quite feel like the piece to me. The harmony is still there, but it doesn’t really carry the same energy that the rest of the piece has. Then from 42—70 when you repeat the main melody over and over to different harmonies, I’d like to see a little bit of variation in the melody. Although the harmonic changes do a deal to keep my interest, and the build toward the end as you move back into the B section is great; there are some times where your harmonic setting is just calling out for some melodic ornamentation (the melodic statement beginning in measure 54 especially comes to mind). Finally I think the piece would have felt more complete if you had not restated the B melody at the end. The parallel motion really emphasizes closing, and restating the B melody really made me feel as if you were getting ready to move the piece even further.

All in all though, this was a suitable treatment for “Penelo’s Theme” and was an enjoyable listen for certain!

Technique:	9/10
Musicality:	9/10
Personal Tilt:	10/10
Overall:	93%

# Penelo's Theme

Blake Waldrep

This arrangement of "Penelo's Theme" is a cute and concise rendition of the popular theme for solo piano. My big problem with this arrangement is that, despite its short length, the piece is rather unfocused. The piece starts to lose a sense of continuity in the bass line of the third bar, whose increased rhythmic activity really isn't lead up to or followed through. The idea continues throughout the piece, but always feels like it's quite detached from the surrounding music.

The transition sections feel similarly detached, although more because of melodic than rhythmic factors (although rhythm is still involved). The musical segment from measure 17 through measure 26 really doesn't seem to fit the rest of the piece. Its melodic material is entirely foreign, and the rhythm neither recalls the opening syncopated rhythm, nor does it foreshadow the dotted rhythm in the next section. Then from bar 29 to 38, there's a similar problem. This time though, the harmonic ground feels more connected to the piece, and there is a sense of building toward a return to the first theme. This time it still feels out of place, but it feels much more directed than the first transition.

I think those two segments would have been better had you incorporated more of the material from the piece itself into your two arrangement. That also would have helped my feeling that the main melodic ideas in the piece didn't get developed as well as they could have been, even in a piece as short of a piece as this. By developing the ideas, you'd be able to create the variety that I think you were going for in the two transition sections, but without losing the sense of the piece and its direction.

Technique:	7/10
Musicality:	7/10
Personal Tilt:	7/10
Overall:	70%

# Eruyt Village

Josh Barron

This is a very pleasant arrangement. This wasn't a piece I was all that familiar with coming into this, and it's quite beautiful, you've set it nicely. The ensemble seems to work well for the piece. My big complaint with this piece is that the second statement of the melody is not all that different. Save from the pizzicato filled sections, there aren't a lot of perceptible changes in the music, as such my interest has waned by the time I've reached the second expressivo section, and then that section really doesn't feel like it's leading toward the end of the piece as it actually does. I think making a little bit more contrast the second time through would help, and then really building to the end would help make the ending feel more like a completion of the piece than simply somewhere to stop. A more specific complaint, nothing major, is that the rhythm in the violin with sextuplets I think would be better if the thirty-second notes at the end were not used. It feels quite awkward as is, and I don't think it would ruin the line if you were to just go A-flat, G-flat, F; or even A-flat, E-flat, F. I don't have a lot of specific things to mention about this piece, it sounds quite nice, and the only complaint I really have is that it really doesn't feel like it's pulling me anywhere, which lost me as a listener about halfway through the piece.

Technical:	9/10
Musicality:	8/10
Personal Tilt:	8/10
Overall:	83%

# The Zertinan Caverns

## Nickthoven

This arrangement of “The Zertinan Caverns” exposes the varied timbral pallet of the small string quartet and piano ensemble. For the strings; glissandi, pizzicato, and harmonics are all utilized; and care is taken to make articulations fit the colour sought. In the piano, a great deal of its range is exploited for variety, and tremolos and clusters add to the instrument’s coloristic variety. Still, for all the piece’s evocative exploitation of timbre, my favourite aspect of the piece is its use of syncopated rhythms. The segment at rehearsal mark C, along with the piano idea at the end of the piece carry my interest more than any of the other ideas in the piece. The rhythmic disagreement between the parts really pushes the piece forward and captures my attention. I don’t have a lot of complaints with this one. The piece is well paced, is always moving toward a goal, and is sonically and musically varied enough to keep my attention without losing the sense of piece.

Technique:	10/10
Musicality:	9/10
Personal Tilt:	10/10
Overall:	96%