

THE PIANO

“Daddy – that man looking sad over there –
Why is his face full of worry and care?”
“Hush son – he’ll hear you. He’s suffering hell –
He’s a pianist”. “Gosh, Daddy – how can you tell?”

“Well, look – he’s no cello, no trombone, no bass –
If he were a fiddler he’d carry a case –
But he hasn’t a case – so it’s clear as the day
The piano is what he must certainly play.

For to play the piano’s a wonderful thing –
You need not have ears or be able to sing.
You press down, and if you know black notes from white
The piano plays everything perfectly right.
Not like a viola, or horn, which plays flat,
Or grumbles and squeaks like a newly-born rat –
You don’t have to blow it, you don’t need a reed –
Indeed – that’s the trouble – you don’t even need
A piano at all – for where’ere you appear
They’ll say “A piano? We’ve got one right here” –
You say, “What’s the make? Does it have a name on?”
They say “Yes – scratched here on the side – it says ‘Ron’”
And you turn up and try to coax beautiful noise
From an old dear worn out by old men and young boys.
She tries, oh she tries, but her heart isn’t in it.
It’s years since the waltz took her less than a minute.

But some nights there’s a concert grand half a mile long,
Which can bellow a chorus or whisper a song.
Three shining brass pedals wink up from the floor
(Though nobody knows what the middle one’s for).

It responds to your touch like the skin on a spine –
On those nights your fingers are almost divine.
But the grand isn’t yours – just a mere one night stand –
Tomorrow an upright is all that’s at hand.

It's been filled up with lager by some passing drunk,
It's middle C's missing, and B flat goes thunk,
The caretaker answers your comments with pique –
“It's a lovely piano. It was painted last week.
Hess played that piano!” Dame Myra,” you ask?
“No, Rudolf,” he says, and returns to his task.

Oh the pianos I've seen have delighted and shocked –
From limpid to lousy, from lovely to locked.
And I've played on them all – dragged a tune from each one
And left each more battered than when I'd begun –

So look at each crowd – look at every bus queue –
You'll see a violin case, a cello or two.
One carries a trumpet – but all those without –
Are pianists. There's millions of pianists about –
They stand, with no instruments, frowning and vexed
For they don't know which piano they'll have to play next”.