

HOW TO PLAY

ABILITY RATING LATE BEGINNER

SCHALE MINUET IN C MAJOR

A deceptively simple-looking piece, this effervescent dance will need good articulation and thoughtful use of dynamics, says **Melanie Spanswick**

Key C major **Tempo** Allegretto **Style** Classical
Will improve your ✓ Articulation ✓ Evenness ✓ Rhythm



This characterful minuet is bold, elegant and full of sunshine! It was written by German composer Christian Friedrich Schale (1713-1800), who's style is often thought to bridge the gap between the High Baroque and early Classical periods. Constructed in four-bar phrases, and in binary form, this three-in-a-bar dance demands a fairly steady tempo. The Allegretto tempo marking is a suggestion, and a crotchet equals 96 beats per minute should do the trick, even if a slower speed could also work.

Make sure the fingering is set in stone from the outset. Starting with the LH, observe the editorial suggestions: the finger change on the repeated Cs in bar 1 and the repeated As in bar 3 will need careful preparation. However, this fingering allows for an easy movement onto the first beats of bars 2 and 4, which will encourage a smooth progression onto the second beats of these bars. Ensure your thumb is neatly tucked under on the first beat of bars 2 and 4. This will also apply between bars 5 and 6 where the thumb and second finger interchange. Aim to keep the hand and the wrist loose and relaxed as you move between the notes. Use a similar movement in the RH part at bar 13, where the second finger needs to cross over the thumb.

Good articulation is important. A stylistically neat performance will be achieved if all LH crotchets

are played non legato. That is, at the end of each crotchet, take your finger off the key before playing the next note. This allows for a minute break in the sound, and adds an elegance and sophistication which should perfectly capture the dance style.

The RH melodic line demands a smoother approach. Aim to play legato in bar 1, but the crotchet in bar 2 should ideally be non legato, matching that of the LH. Bar a few exceptions, the crotchets in the RH part should be articulated with a non legato touch, with the quavers and semiquavers being played smoothly. However, non legato crotchets work well at bars 11 and 13, where the larger intervals in the melody – and the brief move to G major – can be highlighted by a more detached touch.

Ornaments are an important feature. The embellishments in bars 4, 8, and 9 have been written as upper mordents. In this style, interpret each one from the upper note: G, F, G, F (bar 4). In order to play them beautifully, practise the ornaments in isolation, slowly. Use a deep touch on each of the four notes by playing to the bottom of the key bed and using the tips of your fingers – thus producing a large, warm sound on every note using a relaxed wrist and a loose hand. Next, gradually increase the speed, and as you do so, lighten your touch. Every note

in the ornament should now sound tonally and rhythmically even. The trills at bars 6 and 16, also played from the upper note, will benefit from the same slow, heavy practice. A suggested interpretation: E, D, E, D, C, D (bar 16).

LEARNING TIP

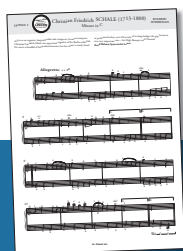
This minuet requires a clean, crisp sound – therefore, just a small dose of sustaining pedal in the last bar will suffice.

Now practise hands together. Start by playing the piece in small sections at a slower speed. A metronome set to quaver beats (or even a semiquaver beat) will help keep the piece firmly in time. Raise the tempo and add the ornaments only when secure. A rhythmic performance is paramount, but a slight rubato at the end of each section – that is, at bars 9 and 18 – will be effective.

Add your own dynamics.

The original score contains no dynamic markings at all. One suggestion could be to start with a bold *mezzo forte*, with a gradual decrescendo to bar 9. Begin the second section (at bar 10) with a softer *piano*, making a powerful crescendo to a majestic *forte* at bar 18. Now reverse these dynamics for the repeats. ■

More about Melanie Spanswick at www.melaniespanswick.com



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