

HOW TO PLAY

ABILITY RATING LATE BEGINNER

MOZART ALLEGRO IN F K15a

For this Classical charmer of a piece, **Melanie Spanswick** encourages you to work hard on perfecting all the different articulations, ornaments and all

Key F major **Tempo** Allegro **Style** Classical

Will improve your ✓ Articulation ✓ Ornament technique ✓ Rhythmic pulse



This elegant miniature appears in Mozart's *The London Sketchbook*. With its bright and breezy RH tune and mainly chordal LH accompaniment, it perfectly illustrates the composer's Classical simplicity of writing. Set in binary form (AB structure), a firm rhythmic pulse is crucial; a suitable tempo might be 120 beats per minute, but it shouldn't be played too fast or else the graceful melody will feel compromised.

Spend ample time working on finger articulations. The markings over the quavers in both hands in bar 1 indicate a crisp, non legato touch. The quavers which appear without a slur or phrase marking should be played in this detached manner. Similarly, LH semiquavers which appear in bar 11 and 35 are also effective if played non legato. Go through the score and mark up all detached note patterns as a reminder.

Start out by learning hands separately, but with a smooth touch. This will help assimilate note patterns and fingerings. Then start applying the non legato touch to relevant notes. To obtain the necessary speed and lightness, swiftly move the fingertip inwards as each note is played, with a 'scratching' motion, clearing the note quickly. This should result in a short, snappy articulation.

Contrast between non legato and legato is very important.

All notes within the slurred groups of six semiquavers must be played smoothly – e.g. those in the RH at bars 5 and 29. Also important are shorter-length slurs, such as the upbeat to bars 1, 7, and 15. When working at these demisemiquaver upbeats, the suggested fingering of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 will only work if the fourth and fifth fingers are firm. Therefore, they need to be properly prepared so that notes are even, both rhythmically and tonally. To achieve this, practise these passages alone, slowly, using the fingertips and a very deep, heavy touch. Try also to add a further accent on the 'weaker' notes played by the fourth and fifth fingers. This will be crucial when playing the B \flat (upbeat to bar 1) and C (first beat of bar 1), as the combination and placement of black and white notes together in a scale passage can give rise to rhythmic instability. After this type of 'heavy' practice, fingers should feel firmer and, when played lightly and at speed, will hopefully result in neat, delicate passagework.

Observe finger changes and keep a steady pulse. The suggested fingering sometimes gives rise to finger changes on the same note, as in bars 1-2, 15-16 etc. Steady and slow practice will help at first until those changes become a habit. Once secure, a useful exercise would be to set the metronome at a quarter of the intended speed, using a quaver or semiquaver beat. Play along, hands separately followed by

hands together, and 'sit' on the tick or metronome beat; this creates a strong sense of pulse and should stop the desire to rush or 'push' the pulse. Increase the speed when confident.

LEARNING TIP

You can add the odd 'touch' of sustaining pedal at the ends of phrases – however, this piece works well without any pedal at all.

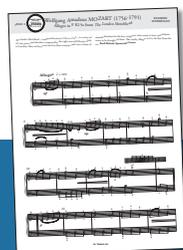
Ornaments appear throughout.

On the first beat of bar 6, a neat acciaccatura from F to E should suffice. The trills at bar 13, 19, and 37 – which are placed on the third quaver beat of the bar – will need more substance. These trills should ideally begin on the upper note. So the third beat in bar 13 might look like this: A, G, A, G, F, G, F (the final F is the crotchet beat in bar 14). All subsequent trills can follow this pattern. If it feels awkward, try a shorter trill: A, G, A, G, F, for example.

The marked dynamic contrasts provide character and interest.

However, you may choose to add your own. The chromaticism in bars 2 and 8 (C-C \sharp -D) and bar 16 (G-G \sharp -A) can be highlighted with an added tenuto marking, in order to give a little colour. Also be sure to nuance the characterful larger intervals in the tune (bar 3, for example) each time they appear. ■

More about Melanie Spanswick at www.melaniespanswick.com



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