

HOW TO PLAY

ABILITY RATING LATE BEGINNER

FÉLIX DUMONT CHANT DES CHASSEURS TYROLIENS

This jovial Austrian hunting song will benefit from even articulation and rhythmic drive, says **Melanie Spanswick**

Key C major **Tempo** *Tempo giusto* **Style** Romantic
Will improve your ✓ Sense of pulse ✓ Finger articulation



Chant des chasseurs Tyroliens (Song of the Tyrolean hunters), is a lively, energetic piece. It was written by French composer Félix Dumont (1832-1917), a distinguished Parisian piano teacher. Dumont was primarily known for his piano method, *École du piano* ('School of piano'). The method consists of eight progressive books, from very simple to advanced, and it became so popular that there have been seven editions of the series. This piece comes from Book 1 (Op 24).

In the key of C, the piece is set in four-bar phrases and is in Ternary form (ABA). It consists of a simplistic, tuneful melody (RH part) and an Alberti-bass accompaniment (LH). This type of accompaniment features a rhythmic note pattern derived from a triad or three-note chord which is often repeated throughout a piece.

Tap the rhythm on a table top before learning. Set a quaver pulse on the metronome and 'tap' through the rhythmic patterns – separate hands at first, and then hands together. Aim to 'sit' on the beat, keeping the semiquaver patterns in the RH part even and fluent, resisting any temptation to rush; this will prove important when you start playing the notes. Start tapping the rhythm slowly, increasing the speed gradually.

Now at the piano, let's first concentrate on a fluent LH.

Play the notes within each Alberti-bass pattern, or each bar, simultaneously, thus creating a chord. This way of practising is known as 'blocking-out' or 'chunking' and it's effective for assimilating note patterns quickly. In bar 1, for example, play the C, E and G at the same time using the suggested fingering. Now do this for each bar until the chords can be played swiftly; try playing through the piece in this manner without any stumbles or hesitations.

The LH thumbs should be played lightly. When playing as written, it's easy to 'thump' the thumb when it is repeated many times. The Alberti bass must be played evenly both rhythmically and tonally, requiring a lighter thumb and a deeper touch on the two lower notes. So again, looking at bar 1, the C and E demand greater tonal colour – particularly the C, as it represents the tonic and is the first note of the bar. Also, be sure to observe the first bass-note minim in bars 9-11 and 13-14: it must be held for the duration of the bar, offering a pedal effect.

Crisp articulation is important. This is especially true in the RH part. The tune will need a crisp clarity, synonymous with this style of music. Ensure a quick but relaxed lateral wrist movement between the C and the E in bar 2; this relatively large interval is a recurring pattern. During practice, play the RH slowly and

LEARNING TIP

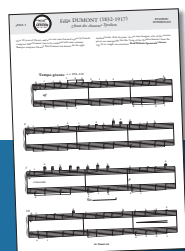
Use the sustaining pedal sparingly, to highlight the ends of phrases.

heavily with a deep touch, keeping semiquavers even and rhythmical. When playing at speed, lighten the touch for clearer articulation.

In order to avoid rushing, give the RH's fourth and fifth fingers extra 'weight'. Try to harness this weight from the arm via a loose wrist, keeping the hand relaxed and fingers firm. This will be helpful in such places as the last two semiquavers (E and D) in bar 1, and the last quaver in bar 13 (D) and bar 14 (C). Similarly, the second finger occasionally needs a firmer touch as it can easily become 'swallowed' in passages such as the second semiquaver G in bar 13. Adding accents during practice can be beneficial in these places.

Find a good balance between the hands. The LH must be softer and lighter, so that the RH can project the melody. Don't ignore the quaver rest at bar 8, either – it provides a necessary breathing space. At bar 12, the chromatic scale in both hands signifies a shift to the dominant key (G major), and the crescendo marking should be noted for dramatic intensity. Even if not marked, a slight *ritenuto* at bar 16 would lead nicely into the recapitulation at bar 17. ■

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