

HOW TO PLAY

ABILITY RATING LATE BEGINNER

PAUL JUON IN THE COSY CORNER OP 91 NO 1

This quirky little piece, penned by a relatively unknown Swiss Romantic composer, will benefit from subtle phrasing and attention to dynamics, advises **Melanie Spanswick**

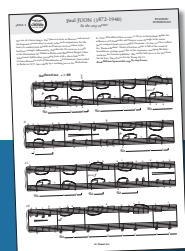
Key A minor **Tempo** Andantino **Style** Late Romantic
Will improve your ✓ Articulation ✓ Rhythmic precision ✓ Phrasing



In the Cosy Corner (in German, *Im Schmollwinkel*) was written in 1933 by Russian-born Swiss composer Paul Juon (1872-1940). Juon studied composition at the Moscow Conservatoire with Anton Arensky and Sergei Taneyev and completed his education at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, where he became professor of composition from 1911-1934. Stylistically, his music is rooted in tonality exhibiting largely Germanic Romantic gestures. This is the first from a set of six pieces for children called *Easy Piano Pieces For Youth*.

In The Cosy Corner is an example of Ternary (ABA) form. In terms of tempo, it moves along nicely at a crotchet equals 69 beats per minute, but the final nine bars, which resemble a Coda, must slow down considerably, as the *piu lento* suggests.

The work is constructed in four-bar phrases. However, the shorter phrases must be noted: In the first bar of the RH part, the first three notes (E, G, F) are phrased together and therefore must be played smoothly, but the final note of this group (the F), can be lifted in preparation for the next note, also an F, which contains a staccato marking. This pattern runs throughout the piece and each final staccato quaver of the four-note pattern should ideally be played lightly and gracefully – in keeping with the Late Romantic



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style – as opposed to a very short and sharp articulation.

LEARNING TIP

Use the sustaining pedal liberally throughout!

Balance of sound between the hands is important. To project the melody effectively, the RH part requires a deeper touch whilst the LH accompaniment can be lighter. On the second beat of bar 2, the RH should be played elegantly with an expressive spread chord followed by a fairly quick release in order to observe the subsequent quaver rest; here it is important to release the sustaining pedal to allow for a short breathing space between each phrase. Where longer phrases are marked, such as at bar 25, smooth, legato contoured lines will help capture the gentle character.

The LH part is equally as important. To learn it fluently, try chunking or ‘blocking-out’ bars which are built from chords – for example, bars 1-5 and bars 9-13. Once the notes in each bar have been learned as chords, play them as written but be sure to hold the minim notes at the bottom of the texture until the end of the bar. This note pattern occurs on numerous occasions, for example, in bars 1, 3, and 5. The sustaining pedal will help create resonance here, as well. It’s also worth observing the LH chords between

bars 17-25: the tenuto markings will require a deeper touch – because the chords act as a strong support to the RH’s meandering tune – before the opening theme returns at bar 29.

Rhythmic precision is paramount. When working on the opening phrase, count in semiquavers so that you are able to precisely ‘place’ the RH semiquaver G between the LH quavers A and C. Sub-dividing the beat into semiquavers will also be useful for passages such as those in the RH at bar 6, 14, 18, 19, and 22-25. Using a metronome might be beneficial until the pulse and rhythmic pattern has been grasped securely, after which you can relax the tempo and employ subtle rubato at the end of each eight-bar phrase, and especially at bar 28.

Observe the dynamic indications. Whilst the first four bars are to be played softly, the music moves to a strident *forte* at bar 5, followed by a diminuendo. This dynamic pattern is repeated in the following eight-bar passage. A full *forte* should be implemented at bar 24, and be sure to note the highlighted *mezzo forte* at bar 35. Keep the last seven bars soft and light, but with a particular emphasis on the semitone oscillation between C# to C natural in the LH chords. The final A minor chord should sound like it is gracefully drifting off into the distance. ■

www.melaniespanswick.com