

# HOW TO PLAY

ABILITY RATING LATE BEGINNER

## LATOUR FIRST MOVEMENT FROM SONATINA NO 1 IN C MAJOR

Brilliant fingerwork combined with a subtly-shaped melody will ensure a winning musical performance of this spirited Classical movement, says **Melanie Spanswick**

**Key** C major **Tempo** Allegretto **Style** Classical

**Will improve your** ✓ Rhythmic precision ✓ Articulation ✓ Evenness



French composer Théodore Latour (1766-1837) wrote in a typically Classical style. This little Sonata exudes all the expected qualities of the era, with its stylishly constructed scalic melodic line and clearly defined four-bar phrase structure. The Allegretto tempo marking and metronome mark of 138 beats per minute should ensure a fairly swift pulse – yet not too fast, or else the charm and elegance may be lost.

### Rhythmic practice can be useful.

This can be done before work at the keyboard begins. Start with a slow pulse, perhaps half that of the metronome suggestion, and tap each hand's rhythmic pattern separately. Do this on a table top, a piano lid, or your knees. Whilst this may feel simple when practised hands separately, combining these fast-moving rhythmic patterns will need focus and concentration. Once you can tap slowly all the way through the piece with good coordination and without any hesitations, tap the rhythmic patterns hands together and increase the speed slowly.

**Good fingering is important.** With its gently contoured passagework, the RH part contains the melodic line and most of the action, thus requiring clean fingerwork. To achieve this fluency, suggested fingerings have been written into the score. Work through the note patterns slowly, paying attention to the various twists and turns such

as the constant use of thumb and second finger in rapid succession in bars 10-11.

### Focus on creating crisp articulation and even passagework.

Once the RH note-patterns have been assimilated, start practising them with a heavy touch, going to the bottom of the key or key-bed on every note. Each fingertip will need plenty of power behind it, preferably with the support of the arm via a flexible, relaxed wrist, so as to alleviate any tension. When secure, increase the speed and lighten your touch for even, crystal-clear passages.

### Pay particular attention to the fourth and fifth fingers.

During practice, to ensure firmness, these fingers may demand extra accents. Passages such as the end of bar 1 into the start of bar 2, where the fourth and fifth fingers are used repeatedly, should be played powerfully during slow practice in order to banish rhythmic insecurity and unevenness. It can help to use a metronome in these places, so that you 'sit' on the tick whilst working at the quaver passages. If you practise like this regularly, these 'weaker' fingers will become firmer and rapid quaver runs will be rhythmic.

**The LH part provides the accompaniment.** The crotchets in bars 2, 8 and elsewhere should be played non-legato for a nice Classical-style, articulated touch.

The minims and quavers, on the other hand, should be legato, whilst passages such as those at bars 4 and 20 – where the quavers come to the fore – will need a brighter, bolder tone in order to support the RH melodic line.

### LEARNING TIP

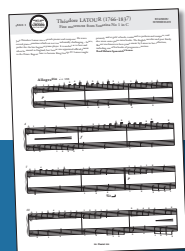
Dynamic contrasts will define every phrase, so aim to implement the suggested 'echo' effects throughout the piece.

### Always shape the RH melody.

Try to create greater colour at specific points during the scalic passages – that is, a deeper touch combined with a 'leaning' into particular notes throughout the phrase. For example, in bar 2 the top C would be more effective with a slight 'leaning' into the note, preceded by a miniscule break, or a 'placing' between the previous note (G) and said C. This turns the C into the 'high point' or apex of the phrase, adding a sense of direction and flow.

**Observe all the rests.** They may seem unimportant, but in Classical music these moments of silence encourage rhythmic clarity, particularly at the ends of phrases such as the fourth beat of bar 8. The final RH chords (between bars 24-27) require a rich, full sound, a dab of sustaining pedal, and a slight *ritenuto*. ■

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