



# CPE BACH

## *La Caroline*

This charming piece is all about expressive nuances, elegant shaping and tone production. Teacher and author **Melanie Spanswick** reveals what you need to know to play it effectively

**Ability rating** Beginner/ Intermediate

**Info**

**Key:** A minor

**Tempo:** Cantabile con moto

**Style:** Classical

**Will improve your**

✓ Legato

✓ Cantabile

✓ Tonal control

**CPE Bach's *La Caroline* is a little study in the use of dynamic colour and tone production.** It is an exquisite work that requires excellent control of the keyboard, despite its fairly slow tempo and generally static bass. I have suggested the speed of crotchet equals 60 beats per minute, but it's also important to keep in mind that very slow speeds can hamper phrasing and musical line. Select a reasonably moderate tempo that permits appropriate musical shape and definition.

**Fingering is crucial for *La Caroline*.**

Judiciously chosen fingering encourages fluent legato and all manner of note 'joining', whether for single or double notes. I've written some suggested fingering in the score. Aim to be secure with your fingering before working musically. Separate hand practice provides the best results.

**Practise line by line, working assiduously at double notes such as those in the right hand (RH) in the first four bars.** These bars require careful voicing because they essentially introduce the counterpoint, where one part or musical line will always need more sound and colour. When negotiating the first four bars, practise the top line alone (E, F, G# and A). In order to achieve a smooth, even phrase, turn your hand outwards slightly, so your arm weight supports the outer part of the hand (towards the fourth and fifth fingers, and away from the thumb). Once supported, it can produce a richer timbre, particularly if combined with flexible movement in the wrist and arm. When this has been mastered, introduce the lower parts (C, D, B and C), playing them lightly and as legato as possible. Don't forget that the top line must ideally reign supreme dynamically.

**In the second bar, aim to turn your RH sufficiently so as to join the notes effectively.** A free wrist and forearm will encourage this movement. The hand will need to turn over the fifth finger (in bar 2) in order to 'reach' the fourth



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finger in bar 3 to play the G#. Keep your fifth finger attached to the F until the G#, played by the fourth finger, is almost sounding (overlapping) before letting go. Grade the sound, so the G# is slightly louder than the F, conforming to the crescendo marking.

**Achieve a totally smooth line, and tone control will be that much easier.** It's best to allow fingers to do the work as opposed to using too much pedal (I have included very few pedal markings on the score). All double notes and part-playing will benefit from this kind of practice throughout *La Caroline*.

**There are two distinct textures in this piece.** First, the melody, which usually appears in the RH, then the accompaniment in the left hand (LH). The melodic line requires plenty of sound definition, while the accompaniment must be soft and light, but supporting where needed.

**Notice the 'Cantabile' marking at the start.** 'Cantabile' means 'in a singing style', and to produce a singing style, use arm weight alongside having complete freedom in the upper body. In bars 5-8, the phrasing in the melody is detailed, and sound production should be continuous and fluid, even though the first notes of bars 5 and 7 require short articulation (*staccatissimo*).

**Support the fifth finger by using a rotational wrist motion, producing a rich tone on the C in bar 5, releasing it for a millisecond before continuing.** The following E, F and E only need a slight nuance (or crescendo followed by a decrescendo within the three-note phrase), again with a free wrist motion on the acciaccatura (G) and following note (F). The acciaccatura must be light and expressive but not too hurried, as if just stroking the key.

**At the end of bar 5 and beginning of bar 6, there can be a tiny break in the sound.** That's where the third finger takes over from the thumb on the E, before tapering off beautifully on the D#. The E needs more sound than the D#. Aim to grade the sound evenly here,

### Learning Tip

Articulate semiquaver patterns in the melody with clarity and precision, changing the sound instead of tempo for expressive effect

with a 'drop-roll' motion. This piece is all about expressive nuances and elegant shaping, so experiment by finding various ways of highlighting each phrase in this manner.

**The LH accompaniment will benefit from good tonal control too.** There are many repeated notes in the LH – try to think of them as a rhythmic support for the melody. Although a light, soft touch is necessary, a regular pulse is important. Keep the momentum without adding rubato. The tempo marking (*con moto*) suggests this as well. Listen to the ends of notes ensuring note lengths are all similar. When playing slow repeated patterns, encourage the same even tone for each one, as well as creating a continuous legato.

**Make a note of rests.** Bars 21, 54, 57 and 58 have deliberate breaks, adding to the dramatic character. A note regarding the pedal: while it can be employed freely for a piece such as this, try to use your fingers to do most of the joining, so that the pedal can be depressed sparingly at the ends of phrases (as I've suggested in the score). Dynamic markings will create suspense, particularly with regards to the *fortissimo* at the end, which brings this sombre yet powerful piece to a poignant close. ■