



BURGMÜLLER

'Innocence' from 25 Easy and Progressive Studies op 100

Follow the advice of teacher and author **Melanie Spanswick** to find the exuberance, clarity, evenness and the firm rhythmic grip you need to master this delightful and evocative work

Ability rating Beginner/ Intermediate

Info

Key: F major
Tempo: Moderato
Style: Romantic

Will improve your

✓ Articulation
✓ Chordal playing
✓ Legato

Innocence hails from a delightful set of descriptive little studies by the German composer Johann Friedrich Burgmüller.

Each study in the set offers technical challenges. This piece requires a graceful exuberance combined with clarity, evenness and a firm rhythmic grip, as it zips along at a suggested tempo of crotchet equals 112 beats per minute. Structurally, *Innocence* is in two halves (bars 1-8 and 9-16), and is therefore in binary form (AB). It is constructed in four-bar phrases in which the right hand (RH) is given all the melodic material, while the left hand (LH) accompanies with chords and quaver figurations.

After assessing the fingering (I've written some in the score), work hands separately. As you do this, take note of the necessary movement around the keyboard, particularly in the RH. Don't worry too much at first about the pulse, it's easier and more productive to locate notes and their positions first. This is a useful tool that will help you to assimilate patterns and repetitions, as well as hand and finger positions.

Bars 1-8 in the LH are comprised of chords. Aim to play each chord evenly and with complete legato. Play the first chord of F major (F-A-C in bar 1), balancing each finger on the top of the keys, using the finger pads (as opposed to the tips), and take the notes down into the key bed at precisely the same moment, employing a flexible wrist and a slight dropping motion. This movement might require careful balancing of the hand at first, as well as attentive listening, but the result will be a beautifully placed chord, each note sounding at the same time as well as being even tonally.

Once you've mastered this technique, practise the chords in bar 2 (F, G, D) in the same manner. Your next task is to work at joining them all. To create a smooth flow (or legato) from one chord to another, go back to bar 1, play the



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chord again, leaving it down for all three beats, until the very last moment when it becomes necessary to change fingers for the next chord. Before you play the next chord (beginning at bar 2), mentally prepare yourself for the correct movement, as it will need to be executed very quickly. At the last moment, let go of the A and the C, carefully shifting the fourth finger and thumb onto notes G and D, while playing the same F from the previous chord with the fifth finger again. Try to do this extremely smoothly, and in a millisecond, balancing and matching the tone. The resulting continuous sound from one chord to the next (with very little break in sound) makes for an even transition, almost total legato, and negates the need for too much sustaining pedal. Aim to practise this technique throughout the LH.

The many RH semiquaver patterns need an even, rhythmical approach. In the first phrase (bars 1 and 2), the fourth finger begins each group of four semiquavers. Endeavour to use this fingering as it will help to strengthen the fourth finger. As always when practising rapid passages, aim to take a slow speed, playing on the finger tips, deep into the key bed, producing a full sound. After playing each group of four notes, allow the wrist to rotate, freeing it (and the hand) of any tension, before continuing to play the next four notes. (You could insert a slight pause in between for practice purposes until this exercise has been digested and feels comfortable.) After practising these patterns slowly, using this movement, add speed and lighten the touch. Although the motion will be much smaller and almost inconsequential, it will still be employed and will attain hand flexibility between sections of passagework, and an even sound too. Try to place every semiquaver exactly with regard to the rhythm (counting aloud and in semiquavers is

usually the best method), so each note in the first bar is precise, with no rushing or pushing of the pulse.

Learning Tip

Enjoy the sustaining pedal! It will add resonance if employed sparingly at the ends of phrases.

The unusual fingering for the three notes in the RH in bar 2 enables clear articulation. The fingering sees fingers 4 and 3 followed by a 2 (on the same note), which allows meticulous placing, and the change to the second finger on beat 2 (a B^b) encourages a tapering-off of sound (suggested by the decrescendo marking). The accents at bar 7 bestow a 'yearning' quality, so be sure to play deeply, colouring each note accordingly.

In bars 9-12, ensure a light, even touch in the LH quaver passages. In those same bars, the start of the work's second half, the RH would benefit from a 'drop-roll' approach: the alternating finger patterns require a loose, free wrist movement, rolling upwards after the first staccato note (a C, first beat of bar 9), and downwards onto the short legato phrase (C, D, E, beats 1-2 of bar 9), and finally rolling upwards as the legato phrase is played, quickly leaving the keys on the beat 2 staccato note E. This pattern can be repeated during all four bars. Counting is paramount here.

The final RH flourish (the scale passage at bars 13-15) calls for judicious preparation. Check fingering and movement patterns (especially the use of the fifth finger on the last semiquaver G in that bar), before hurtling down the keyboard. Turning the hand freely will be crucial, in order to produce clear, evenly placed notes – especially in the penultimate bar, where a crescendo will bring this piece to an effective end. ■