



# HEUMANN

## *Modern Minuet & Modern Waltz*

Teacher and author **Melanie Spanswick** looks at two short and contrasting pieces that together provide an excellent opportunity to perfect your tonal variation, articulation and cantabile

**Ability rating** Beginner

**Info**

**Key:** G major (Minuet);  
C major (Waltz)

**Tempo:** Moderato (Minuet);  
Lively waltz (Waltz)

**Style:** Modern/Contemporary

**Will improve your**

- ✓ Staccato and legato touches (Minuet)
- ✓ Cantabile (Waltz)
- ✓ Sense of interpretation (both)

*Modern Minuet* is the first of two pieces written exclusively for *Pianist* by German composer Hans-Günter Heumann. Both pieces appear in this issue's Scores section.

*Modern Minuet* should ideally be performed with plenty of colour and tonal variation. The texture of the piece is fairly sparse, consisting essentially of just two parts; the melody in the right hand (RH) and accompanying material in the left hand (LH).

One interesting feature of this piece is the oscillating articulation. The articulation changes frequently from staccato to legato, with the addition of tenuto markings. Once you have settled on the fingerings, begin by practising the LH. The first six bars of the LH contain one bar of legato followed by a bar of staccato. Use a slight drop-roll movement in bar 1: drop the wrist on the first note (G), and then roll up and away from the key on the second note (D). This provides totally smooth legato and a full sound, and will also cleanly articulate the slur marking placed over the two notes in bar 1. All subsequent bars with slur markings can be articulated in this manner.

The LH in the second bar requires staccato. Seeing that many passages marked with this articulation contain a chordal pattern, it might be helpful to practise finding the shape quickly by blocking the notes out – that is, playing them all together at once. In bar 2, this will involve playing the F, C# and D altogether. By playing the notes as a chord, you'll be able to immediately grasp the fingering and note patterns. Now aim to play them separately as written, short and detached, rolling swiftly off each note after it has been played, using a slight upward wrist motion, rolling up and away from the note after leaving the key.

The RH has longer phrases that generally last two bars. The first phrase (bars 1 and 2) contains a crotchet, followed by four quavers and finally a dotted minim. This recurring pattern needs to be placed precisely



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Find out more about Melanie at [www.melaniespanswick.com](http://www.melaniespanswick.com).

rhythmically. Counting in quavers can be beneficial, but for exact rhythmic placement, experiment by sub-dividing the beat further, and count in semiquavers. Even though there aren't any semiquavers in this piece, counting in small note values enforces a strict rhythmic pulse and precise placement of notes.

Dynamics tend to rise and fall within each RH phrase. The first note in bar 1 is *mezzo forte*, yet the quaver at the end of the bar (a D) is the top of the phrase tonally and could rise to a *forte*, with the subsequent A (in bar 2) being placed quite softly (*mezzo piano*, perhaps). This shape can be employed in bars 3 and 4 where the dynamics are much softer, and in bars 5 and 6, where dynamic suggestions have been included. At bar 9, the top of the phrase occurs on the second note (the A on beat 2 in bars 9 and 11).

The climactic moment (bars 15-16) demands a tenuto touch. This means to lean a little longer and with a slightly fuller sound on each note. Both tenuto and staccato are indicated on the score here, and a deeper, richer tone will incite drama, before the return of the opening material. Such articulations cement the minuet character. A *ritenuto* brings this melodious work to a close.

*Modern Waltz* is brisk, tuneful and lies comfortably under the fingers. While firmly based in C major, this piece has many added chromatic notes (notes that are not in the home key), suggesting a pentatonic flavour, adding a definite 'modern' feel.

The dance-like lilt is prevalent in the LH, which features chordal patterns similar to those found in the *Modern Minuet*. Try to block the patterns out in the same way I suggested for the *Minuet* (playing one chord per bar; for example, F#, C# and an E in bar 1). Once the whole piece has been worked at in this fashion, examine every bar in isolation.

Counterpoint (where several lines of music play together in harmony) appears in the LH throughout the piece. The F# in bar 1 must be held right to the end of the bar, with the C# and E being placed above it. To negotiate the 'two-part' texture with ease, play the bass line alone. Take the first four bars and play the F# (bar 1), B (bar 2), E (bar 3) and A (bar 4) – aiming to move at the very end of the bar, joining the notes carefully. Once you've mastered this, take the 'top' of the texture (the C# and E in bar 1, for example), and add it to the bass. Resist the temptation to let go of the bass. Keep it firmly held to the end of each bar at all times, playing the upper line of the harmony lightly. This applies to virtually the entire LH.

### Learning Tip

These pieces work well as a pair, so if they are to be performed together, learn the *Modern Minuet* first.

The RH is best played with a deep, firm touch, providing cantabile ('in a singing style'). The long phrases, from bars 1-5 at the opening, need shape and colour. Support the fingers with a free wrist and arm weight, by playing into the key bed, so that the sound lasts for the whole bar (on the A in bar 1, for example). Then grade the next note so that it matches the sound to the previous one. If bar 1 is *mezzo forte* (as indicated), ensure the B (in bar 2), has slightly more sound, dying away on the A (also bar 2), then even less tone on the G (bar 3). Grading the sound in this way will need constant adjustment and careful listening, but will instigate a fluent, smooth musical phrase.

The climax in bars 13-15 will be more effective with a gradual crescendo. You'll also want to focus on precise placing of tenuto markings, which appear in the RH on the first beat of every bar. Aim to employ the sustaining pedal (as written), changing cleanly at the end of each bar, adding resonance to this lovely dance. ■