



# MOZART

## Allegro in B flat K3

Uniformity and neatness may be vital in this delightful work, but don't let that stop you having some fun with your articulation, says **Melanie Spanswick**

**Ability rating** Late beginner

**Info**

**Key:** B flat major

**Tempo:** Allegro

**Style:** Classical

**Will improve your**

✓ Articulation

✓ Non legato touch

✓ Tonal contrasts

**This charming little piece was one of Mozart's first compositions.**

Its structure is binary form (AB), consisting of two sections with repeats. A crotchet equals 116-120 bpm is a suitable sprightly tempo, but a slower speed might be just as effective, allowing for greater dynamic detail.

**Let's begin by practising hands separately.**

When working through the piece, observe note patterns and try to ensure that you play notes 'in position' as much as possible. This means avoiding any excessive turns of the wrist. Keep your hands strong and steady. Doing so negates any need to move unnecessarily, keeping fingers close to the keys, helping to eliminate note errors. For example, aim to use the suggested fingering in the LH passage at bar 3; this offers the chance to keep the hand in the same position, that is, without 'turning' or moving excessively, which is what might happen if the thumb is involved.

**Notice the use of the arpeggio figure in the RH melody.**

It appears in bars 1-2, 13, 17, 21-22. Go through the piece observing the note patterns and the fingering required to play them. It can help to 'block out' or play such note patterns at the same time. For example, at bars 7, 15, and 19, the larger intervals in the melody need precise hand and finger movements in order to gauge their distance; you can do this by playing two quaver beats at the same time (for example, with bar 15, play the C and G together, and then the D and G together).

**The RH contains phrased pairs of quavers.**

These occur at many different stages throughout the piece, and can be successfully negotiated by employing the 'drop-roll' or 'drop-lift' technique. Let's take the first phrased pair as an example (in bar 1). For the



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drop-lift, 'drop' a very relaxed, pliable hand and wrist in a downward motion as the fourth finger strikes the D, and then 'roll' the hand and wrist up and away from the keyboard after the second note (B $\flat$ , second finger) has been played. This has the beneficial effect of slurring the notes in a smooth legato manner at the same time as providing a distinct articulation, due to the careful lifting of the second note. Take care to play both quavers evenly in terms of rhythm and tone.

**Articulation plays a vital role in this style.** Notes which are not slurred, such as those in bars 3 and 5, would benefit from a non legato touch. Non legato simply means not joined. To define notes in a non legato manner, the note should be sounded clearly. But remember: before any subsequent notes are played, you need to lift the finger cleanly off in order to produce a 'gap'. The success of this technique all rests on the moment the note is lifted. For a clear non legato, leave your finger on the note as long as possible, lifting it at the last moment. Lift quickly and decisively, so that there is a miniscule but definite 'break' in the sound before the next note is struck.

**Different note lengths require different touches.** Non legato quavers, such as those in bars 3 and 5, are best played with a more bouncy, springy non legato. But this must not be confused with a staccato or a 'short, sharp' articulation. These non legato quavers must still be elegant, with a gentle 'lift' at the end of each note. Non legato crotchets, on the other hand, feel much longer in length as the note lasts for double the time to that of the quaver.

**The LH provides a solid lower part.**

Once notes are secure, articulate with precision. For example, in bar 1, aim to keep the LH crotchets held until almost the end of the beat, leaving the note at exactly the same moment as the second quaver of each pair in the RH. This offers a uniformity and neatness which is necessary in the Classical style. Similarly, keep upbeat light, with a slight emphasis on the first beat of the bar (e.g. bars 8-9).

**Learning Tip**

Observe the rests! They will give your performance the necessary breathing space.

**Coordination will determine the success of a performance.**

When practising hands together, slow practice will encourage astute listening; try to ensure notes are sounded altogether. Balance between the hands will also be key; give the RH a slightly brighter, deeper touch, and the LH a more muted timbre. For a perfectly honed pulse, aim to keep time with a semiquaver pulse at first, eventually switching to quavers. A firm pulse is a prerequisite in this style.

**Tonal contrasts offer character and depth.**

I've added a few suggestions to the score. Echo effects work well from bars 3-6 and 13-20. The grace note (*acciaccatura*) in the RH at bars 9 and 27 needs to be played quickly and lightly. Make sure to play it before the beat. For guidance, listen to Chenyin Li's performance on the *Pianist* album. You can afford a slight *ritenuto* during the penultimate bar, bringing this delightful work to a close. ■