

HOW TO PLAY

ABILITY RATING LATE ELEMENTARY

GURLITT MARCH OF THE TIN SOLDIERS OP 130 NO 6

Follow **Melanie Spanswick**'s advice, and you'll be feeling a spring in your step when you perform this composer's catchy study

Key F major Tempo March Style Romantic

Will improve your ✓Rhythm ✓Chord playing ✓Hand coordination



This bold and lively piece comes from German composer Cornelius Gurlitt's *35 Easy Studies Op 130*. It is full of character and charm and bounces along nicely at dotted crotchet equals 104 beats per minute. The notes fit comfortably under the hands with only a few awkward hand position changes.

A march such as this demands astute rhythmic precision and adherence to a strict pulse.

To achieve this, let's start by focusing solely on the rhythm (the notes can come later). Set in 6/8, or compound duple time, aim to count each quaver – that is, six quaver beats to a bar – and, taking your LH, tap the LH part's rhythm on your piano lid.

In the early stages of learning, it might be a good idea to use a metronome. Set it to a quaver beat and keep a slow steady pulse. Ensure each crotchet and quaver is well 'placed', neither rushing nor slowing down. Now tap the RH part's rhythm with your RH on your piano lid, again keeping a firm, regular pulse. Finally, combine the hands, tapping both rhythmic lines to either your own counting or to the metronome.

Back at the piano, let's focus on the LH accompaniment.

The chords need decisive, clean articulation. These chords are triads (three-note chords) and for practice purposes, it can help to

'block' them, playing one chord per bar. Work through the piece as such, paying attention to note and hand position changes, such as between bar 2 to bar 3, where the A is replaced by a B \flat in the middle note of the triad. When playing the chords (bars 1-8 and 17-24), aim for a firmer touch on the crotchets and a lighter one on the quavers.

The RH accompaniment needs a similar approach between bars 9 to 16. Also, be sure to prepare the hand for the quick upward jump in the middle of bar 16. You will need a swift lateral motion in order to grab all notes of the top *sforzando* C major chord.

Let's turn our attention to the RH melody line. Ensure a smooth change of fingering from thumb to fourth finger on the repeated C at the start of bar 2. Keep your hand soft and pliable so that the movement feels natural. In general, the quaver beats should be played slightly lighter than the crotchets, particularly at bar 1 (beat 1), bar 2 (beat 1) and bar 3 (beat 1).

You will notice that the melodic line moves in a spirited downward pattern from a high F to middle C in bar 4. One possible interpretation is to open the piece with a bold *mezzo forte* (as written) and continue building the sound until the middle C at bar 4. Another possibility is to keep *mezzo forte* throughout the

first phrase (bars 1-4) subsequently building the sound throughout the second phrase, with a *sforzando* on the final chord (bar 8). The LH melodic line in bars 9 to 16 might follow the same dynamic plan, but the marking of *fortissimo* indicates a more forthright, powerful sound.

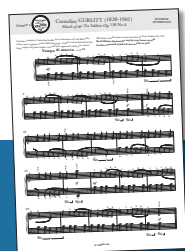
LEARNING TIP

Aim to use minimal sustaining pedal: a clipped and clean articulation will help promote the march-like feel perfectly

Now it's time to play hands together. Try to get the rhythm spot-on and to place crotchet and quaver beats precisely together. Also make sure not to rush through the groups of three quavers in the RH – they are an important part of the melody and need to sound clear.

Good coordination between the hands is crucial. There are specific areas where making sure that the desired simultaneous placement between the hands can be tricky, especially when played at the desired speed. A good example is the section between bars 9 to 16, where you will need to pay special attention to the last quaver of each bar. A slow metronome pulse can be beneficial; start at a quarter of the intended speed and work your way up to full speed. ■

More about Melanie Spanswick at www.melaniespanwick.com



SCORE
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