

HOW TO PLAY

ABILITY RATING LATE BEGINNER

BEYER PREPARATORY SCHOOL FOR PIANO OP 101 NO 88

A strong sense of rhythm is the key technical ingredient for making this attractive study come to life, says **Melanie Spanswick**

Key G major **Tempo** Moderato **Style** Early Romantic
Will improve your ✓Articulation ✓Balance between the hands ✓Phrasing



This graceful study focuses on developing effective finger articulation coupled with a clear sense of phrasing and melodic shape. Marked Moderato, and set in neat four-bar phrases within an AB structure, the tempo should remain controlled so as to maintain the piece's elegant character.

Let's start with the LH. The first six bars contain just two chords: the tonic chord (G, B, D) in bars 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6, and the sub-dominant chord in its second inversion (G, C, E) in bar 3. These chords reappear between bars 9-14. Aim to play the notes in each bar as two minim chords: for example, in bars 1 and 2, play the G, B and D together. Go through the piece 'blocking out' the LH part in this way, swiftly assimilating the note patterns and fingerings.

Now to practise the LH as written. The minim G in every bar provides the pedal note. Begin by playing each minim alone with the fifth finger, ensuring that the note is depressed for the entire beat. When each subsequent minim note is played, lift the finger quickly at the last moment, gently re-sounding the note so that there are no gaps in the sound. This ensures a legato line. When adding the quavers which appear in-between the minims, keep them light, well-articulated and rhythmical.

The melody is in the RH. For practice purposes, play bars 1-6

and 9-14 without the dotted quaver/semiquaver rhythm – that is, all notes as quavers – in order to help learn note patterns and fingerings. To play these quavers smoothly and rhythmically, set a slow quaver pulse on a metronome, and place every note precisely to each 'tick'. Now add the dotted quaver/semiquaver rhythm, and ensure a deeper touch on the dotted quaver and a lighter touch on the semiquaver. It can be beneficial to count using a semiquaver beat here, in order to 'place' each note correctly.

Notice the rapid semiquaver flourishes at bars 7, 8, 15 and 16. Play these with the utmost clarity and rhythmic precision. Practise these bars slowly and with a deep touch, always playing each note to the bottom of the key. Also take care to ensure that both the wrist and the hand are relaxed during the hand turns (the moment when the thumb turns under the hand, as at beat 1, bar 7), which should enable the thumb to sound each note with the same tone as the fingers – thus producing an even touch. For practice purposes, set the metronome to a semiquaver beat; this encourage elegant, rhythmic and tidy articulation.

Start practising hands together. Begin with a slow tempo, making sure that the RH semiquaver melody note fits perfectly between the LH quaver accompaniment. For beats 1 and 2 in bar 1, try to

play the RH Ds and the LH G (minim) and B (second quaver) firmly, providing a strong rhythmic pulse on the main beats. The LH quaver Ds and the RH semiquaver C# and E can be lighter. As always, a metronome set to a semiquaver pulse will really help to solidify this rhythmic pattern.

LEARNING TIP

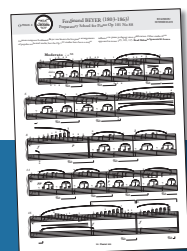
Try to allow for a slight 'breathing' space at the end of each phrase.

Keep in mind the dolce ('sweet') marking in the first bar. The LH part should be supportive, yet soft, allowing the RH melody to shine – always remembering to keep the melody line legato throughout.

A general word about dynamics: During the first four-bar phrase, more tonal colour is required on the first three beats of bars 1 and 2, with a diminuendo on beat 4. Bar 3 must start softer but should crescendo to bar 4, again with a diminuendo, or a 'phrasing off', on beat 3 of bar 4. Greater sonority will be necessary at bars 7-8 and 15-16. Note: Remember to repeat the first eight bars.

I have included pedal markings. Pedalling is not imperative, though, and can be introduced when the notes are secure. ■

More about Melanie Spanswick at www.melaniespanswick.com.



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