

HOW TO PLAY

ABILITY RATING LATE BEGINNER

CHADWICK

SIS TEMPY'S STORY, FROM 10 LITTLE TUNES FOR 10 LITTLE FRIENDS

The right balance of syncopation and staccato will work wonders on this little number, says **Melanie Spanswick**

Key C major **Tempo** Alla zoppa (in syncopated style) **Style** Late-Romantic
Will improve your ✓Rhythm ✓Articulation ✓Pedalling



Sis Tempy's Story was written by the American Late-Romantic composer George W Chadwick (1854-1931). He was a member of the Boston Six, also known as the Second New England School, – a group of composers based in New England and acknowledged by many as being pivotal in developing an idiomatic American style. Amy Beach, Arthur Foote, Edward MacDowell, John Knowles Paine and Horatio Parker were the remaining five members. [Scores by all, bar Parker, appear inside this issue.]

Notice the unusual tempo marking, *Alla zoppa*. This literally means 'limping' or 'halting', and, taken in the context of music, refers to syncopation. The meaning of syncopation is a temporary displacement of the regular metrical accent in music caused typically by stressing the *weak* beat. Here the syncopation appears on the second quaver – one of the 'weak' beats – and it's nearly always a crotchet in length. With the addition of the accent over the syncopated note, it should be stressed even more. I like a metronome marking of a crotchet equals 108 beats per minute.

Let's begin by tapping or clapping the rhythm. It can help to tap the RH part with your right hand, and LH part with your left. Do this on your piano lid or, if you prefer, on your knees. Establish a slow quaver pulse – perhaps

using a metronome at first, setting the click to a quaver beat. When tapping, be sure to 'place' the semiquavers precisely (e.g. bars 4 and 7), and add extra weight to all those syncopated, accented crotchets appearing on the second quaver beat (as in bars 1, 3, 5, 9 and 11). When accenting the crotchets, give them their full value, avoiding the temptation to rush off the beat quickly and therefore not correctly placing the fourth quaver beat in the bar. When all of this is secure, raise the tempo to full speed. Now you can approach the instrument!

The RH part contains the melodic material. The suggested fingering at bars 4, 12, and 32 might feel a little uncomfortable at first – what with the slight stretch between the third finger (C) and second finger (A). But it makes sense because the last melody-note of the bar (the G) can be played by the thumb. This also means that the fourth finger is in the correct position to play the C at the start of the next bar.

Practise hands separately at first, learning note patterns securely. Slow work is required to ensure perfect coordination between the hands. The passage between bar 17 to 28 will need special attention: Practise slowly and try to 'place' the LH's quavers carefully and precisely against the RH's quavers and semiquavers (see bars 17, 19, 21, and 23). It can be useful to

give a slight 'push' or accent on certain notes: e.g. the notes in both hands on the second and third quaver beats of bar 17.

Staccato articulation is an important feature. It is easier to implement when both hands

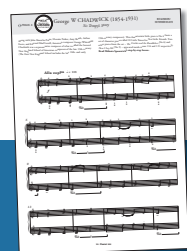
LEARNING TIP

Make the most of the *piano* (*p*) marking at bar 17; most of the piece is marked *forte* (*f*), so it comes as a welcome surprise!

play staccato at the same time (for example, right at the start on the first beat). However, it is altogether trickier when one hand plays staccato and the other requires a different touch. See bar 7, where the LH is staccato but the RH line needs to remain smooth. Here, be sure to keep the tied RH quaver firmly in place, while the LH plays with a spikey, detached touch. This is also important at bars 17, 19, 21 and 23.

The sustaining pedal will add a nice bit of resonance. It will assist in capturing the strident mood of the piece, especially in the bars containing more static chords (e.g. bars 2, 6, 10, 26 and 28). Make sure the pedal is always fully released before continuing with the melody line. ■

More about Melanie Spanswick at www.melaniespanswick.com.



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