

HOW TO PLAY

ABILITY RATING LATE BEGINNER

GURLITT MUSICAL CLOCK OP 210 NO 16

This energetic piece, from the composer's set of easy piano pieces entitled *The First Performance*, is a tale of two halves, explains **Melanie Spanswick**

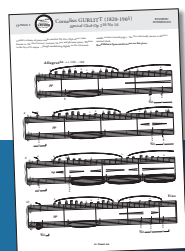
Key G major **Tempo** Allegretto **Style** Romantic
Will improve your ✓ Articulation ✓ Evenness ✓ Rhythm



Firstly, take note of the two **constrasting** sections. The first half (bars 1-16) consists of quick RH passagework which should be rhythmically tight, even and legato. By comparison, the second *scherzando* section (bar 17 to the end) requires a lighter, more whimsical character with a predominantly detached LH touch. Bars 1-16 should be repeated, with the piece ending at the *Fine*.

The first section can be practised 'blocked-out'. That is, playing the notes in each bar altogether, forming one chord, which helps identify note patterns and solidifies fingering. Note: not *all* the notes within a bar will fit, but the majority should fall conveniently into chords. Try practising hands separately at first, concentrating mainly on the 'harder' RH part. When blocking-out hands together, move fairly swiftly from bar to bar so that note patterns and hand-position changes are thoroughly assimilated.

The RH part will need careful, **slow practice**. Passages such as those in bars 1-2 can easily become uneven without giving the fourth and fifth fingers special attention. With this in mind, place accents on the first three notes of bars 1 and 2. When playing these notes with a heavier touch, sink into the key bed, whilst fully engaging the first-finger joint, so that fingers are able to 'stand' on their tips. This will help promote firmer fingers



SEE SCORES SECTION

and, when playing in tempo, they will have the control in order to play the passages evenly and without any sense of rushing. Make a slight accent on the first note of bars 9 and 11 as well (C played by the fourth finger).

A slight RH rotational wrist motion will help. When working on the arpeggio patterns in bars 1, 2, 5, 6, 9-11 and 13-14, allow the arm to guide the wrist and hand into place, whilst keeping a flexible wrist. Now practise bars 1-16 slowly, with an exaggerated heavy touch, using a metronome set to a quaver beat.

Once secure, increase the speed and lighten the touch. The quavers should flow nicely, and you will be able to play them softly and evenly. When playing hands together, place the LH chords decisively, and hold them for their full value. The fingerings will help achieve a smooth legato as you move from chord to chord. Always observe the crescendo and decrescendo markings.

Now to the second half of the piece. Hands separate practice will be useful for learning the detached LH crotchets in bars 21-28 and 33-39. In order to capture the playful character, the LH staccato touch needs to be soft and light, as opposed to very short and sharp. Try to produce a smoother touch in the RH part, paying attention to the short phrase markings.

The dotted quaver/semiquaver motifs in bars 17-20 (and elsewhere) will need to be rhythmically spot-on. Set the metronome to a semiquaver tick for this section, and work slowly,

LEARNING TIP

The sustaining pedal should be used sparingly, adding a rich resonance to chords but not smudging rapid passages.

ensuring each semiquaver is accurately placed. Now increase the speed and make sure that the crotchet that follows each motif is held for its full value (e.g. first beat of bar 17).

Scattered throughout, the rests play an important role! As you can see, the *scherzando* section contains crotchet rests in both hands, enabling breathing space as well as the playful mood. Make sure that one can 'hear' the rests (a metronome can help for this, as one is more aware of the beat). When both hands come together at bars 21-28 and 32-40, remember to pay attention to the LH, concentrating on playing with a detached, light articulation whilst keeping the hand and wrist relaxed. The RH melody must really 'sing', and should be played with greater tonal colour and a clear sense of direction. ■

More about Melanie Spanswick at www.melaniespanswick.com.