

ABILITY RATING ELEMENTARY

BARTÓK

SUNRISE, NO 2 FROM BOOK 1 OF 'FOR CHILDREN' SZ 42

Don't let the dissonances catch you off guard in this quirky yet calm miniature, advises **Melanie Spanswick**

Key C major **Tempo** Andante **Style** 20th century

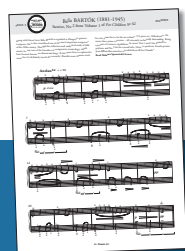
Will improve your ✓ Short phrasing ✓ Chromatic chords ✓ Rhythmic pulse



Hungarian composer Béla Bartók (1881-1945) was one of the most influential composers of the 20th century. And yet he wrote a considerable number of pedagogical piano pieces for beginners and elementary players. This tranquil piece appears as No 2 in the first of a four-volume set of short pieces entitled *For Children*. Marked Andante, the suggested speed of a crotchet equals 88 beats per minute allows the music to flow without feeling too rushed.

Sunrise is mostly constructed in eight-bar phrases. Mark these with a pencil. It's worth noting that the first phrase between bars 1-8 is repeated at bars 9-16, but on second hearing features chromatic harmony in the LH part which creates a more insistent intensity. Bars 17-24 act as a bridge passage and in the final five bars (25-29), which could be considered a coda, the sun has finally risen, and the music softly dies away.

Adherence to the rhythmic pulse is vital. Even though Sunrise is slow and melodic, keeping strict time will help capture the undulating character. Before learning begins, tap the rhythm on your piano lid: the RH tapping the RH part and the LH tapping the left. A metronome might be a useful aid, but counting out loud will also work. Start by tapping hands separately, and then together, and be sure to note the rests in bar 2 and 4.



SEE SCORES SECTION

Practise each hand separately. This will benefit fingering and note-pattern learning as well as developing an understanding of the more unusual chordal pattern shapes in the LH part. For example, in bars 1 and 3 the composer employs a C and D to be played simultaneously on the first quaver beat. This interval of just one tone creates a dissonance which resolves on the first beat of the following bar. Place the third and fourth fingers firmly on these two dissonant notes so that they sound at exactly the same moment.

The LH contains chromatic chords. As is usual in Bartók's style, the C major tonality is peppered with notes which are not in the key. Sometimes known as dissonances, they don't always lie comfortably under the hand. In order to create the legato short phrases, chords such as those in bars 12-13 and 24-25 require a relaxed wrist movement and one that allows flexibility in the hand so as to guide the fingers to the correct place. In bar 12, keep the first chord held for as long as possible and swivel the hand onto the A and C# of the next chord by moving fingers 2 and 4 over and to the right of fingers 1 and 5, as they hold the first chord in place. Only release fingers 1 and 5 when fingers 2 and 4 have depressed their respective notes.

The melody appears in the RH part. Notice the *dolce* (sweetly) musical marking at the start. Finger movements in bars 6, 14

and 26 should be supported by a flexible hand and wrist, the second finger moving swiftly over the thumb in order to create a smooth legato scale passage. Observe the 'swell' of sound required during longer melodic phrases such as those marked by the crescendo-decrescendo markings at bars 5-8, 13-17 and 25-28.

LEARNING TIP

Minimal sustaining pedal is all you need, with just a little added at the end of the three main sections.

The ability to master short phrases is crucial. At the start, both hands have the same short phrase markings, such as the two-note slurred quavers. In order to phrase with elegance, lift the fingers off the keys at the end of these paired quavers, if just for a millisecond, before continuing. Hence, all short two- and three-note phrases would benefit from a slight separation after the final note. Also remember to emphasise the notes marked with a tenuto sign (see first beats of the bar).

Echo effects between the hands appear at bars 21-24. Play this passage in a soft, hushed manner, before the final refrain. Play the last three bars without a ritenuito and hold the final chord for slightly longer than marked, as suggested by the fermata pause sign. ■

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