

HOW TO PLAY

ABILITY RATING LATE ELEMENTARY

AUGUST EBERHARD MÜLLER

NO 12 FROM EASY PIECES

Melanie Spanswick's 'blocking out' technique will ensure a rhythmic Alberti bass accompaniment for this German composer's poignant Allegretto melody

Key A minor **Tempo** Allegretto **Style** Classical

Will improve your ✓ LH agility ✓ RH phrasing ✓ Sense of pulse



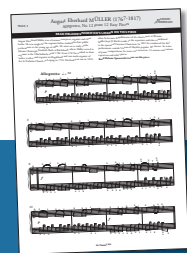
August Eberhard Müller (1767-1817) was a popular German composer, organist and choir leader. He wrote a considerable number of works for the piano – particularly popular are his studies of which he wrote a total of six books, published in 1817. This is the final piece from his *Easy Pieces* (Leichte Handstücke).

The Allegretto tempo marking suggests a fairly calm pulse. A metronome marking of a crotchet equals 52 works well. In the key of A minor and constructed in four-bar phrases, this study is in Binary form (that is, an AB structure).

The LH part is a fine example of an Alberti bass accompaniment.

This is a broken chord or arpeggiated accompaniment pattern or figure which is centred around repeating notes within a particular chord. It is often used in music from the Classical period.

'Blocking out' or chunking notes in the LH part is a useful practice aid. Start by playing the notes of each note group altogether. For example, on the first beat of bar 1 play the A, E, C, E semiquaver note-pattern together as one chord. Now do this for the second beat of the bar, and for all subsequent beats throughout the piece. This helps assimilate note and fingering patterns and is especially useful when patterns change, e.g. between the second beat of bar 14 and the first beat of bar 15, where swift movement will be necessary.



SEE SCORES SECTION

Now play the LH semiquavers as written. Set a slow speed on the metronome, one which encourages you to play each semiquaver beat to one 'tick' for precise placement. Practise note patterns with a heavy touch at first, producing a full sound, keeping your hand, wrist and arm relaxed at all times. When confident, raise the speed, perhaps moving to a quaver metronome pulse, and lighten your touch – fingers should now feel firmer after slow heavy practice. Play lower notes within each crotchet-note group with a bolder touch, the A and C on the first beat of bar 1, for example, and the thumb, on the E, much lighter. As you add speed, ensure fluency by establishing a firm pulse – an important attribute of the Classical style.

Short slurs are a feature in the RH melodic line. The drop-roll or drop-lift approach might work well here. To achieve this over groups of paired quavers, drop your hand and wrist as you play the opening C with your third finger, rolling them up and away from the keyboard as you play the second note (an A) with your thumb. This produces a neat, elegant and smooth legato phrasing between the two notes. Paired slurred notes can all be played in this manner but notes without any slurred markings – such as the quaver B and the two quaver As in bar 2 – require a non legato touch. These notes should be played in a disconnected manner. Now go

through the piece and mark all non legato notes in the melodic line.

Take note of the acciaccatura in bars 4 and 12. An acciaccatura is a grace note or ornament, denoted as a small note which appears printed with a line through the stem. The acciaccaturas appear in the RH part as two-note chords.

LEARNING TIP

Vary dynamics when repeating each section.

They should be played swiftly before moving on to the second two-note chord – the crotchet B and G# – which takes up the lion's share of the beat. Practise the acciaccatura chord (identical in bars 4 and 12) moving slowly and firmly on to the next chord with a legato touch; when comfortable, play the acciaccaturas swiftly and lightly, a fraction before the main beat, so that the low LH E coincides with the main RH chord.

Good coordination between hands might take time and slow practice. When secure, increase the speed, playing through regularly with a metronome for a solid pulse, resisting any urge to rush. The RH must sing out, so try to keep the LH accompaniment soft and light, allowing the music to breathe at the end of each four-bar phrase. ■

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