

# HOW TO PLAY

## ROBERT FUCHS ROMANCE, NO 13 FROM CHILDREN'S ALBUM OP 47

Study the layout, familiarise yourself with the key signature and imagine the characters before embarking on the nitty-gritty practice of this yearningly gentle gem, says **Melanie Spanswick**



**Robert Fuchs (1847-1927) was an Austrian teacher and composer.** He was professor of music theory and harmony at the Vienna Conservatory where he taught many notable composers including Gustav Mahler, Hugo Wolf, Jean Sibelius, and George Enescu. Stylistically, his music is tuneful with a rich harmonic tonal palette. He was greatly influenced by the music of Schubert and Brahms – the latter being an ardent admirer of his work.

**The Romance Op 47 No 13 comes from a collection of 24 miniatures called *Children's Album*.** These charming works often have imaginative titles and provide useful teaching material for piano teachers. Romance is in the key of D minor and is set in ternary form (or an ABA structure). *Ziemlich langsam* translates literally as 'rather slow', so the suggested metronome marking of a crotchet equals 88 beats per minute should suffice.

**The two outer sections are almost identical.** They are in the key of D minor, and it's worth noting that, between bars 1-8 and 18-25, both hands remain in the treble clef – a common feature in elementary music. The first section (bar 1-8), which is repeated, briefly migrates to F major in bars 3-4. The middle passage (bars 9-17) moves to D major. A helpful exercise might be to play through the scale and arpeggio of D major and D minor before starting to learn the piece. Interestingly, the music begins on the dominant chord of D minor (or chord V: A-C#-E) providing that slightly unsettling feeling.

**You may find it beneficial to create a story around the piece.** Try adding words to accompany the music. The gentle and expressive, yet rather sombre, opening and closing sections could resemble a singer with accompaniment setting a desolate scene. However, the sunnier but more complex middle passage includes several 'characters' because there are four clear 'voices', or lines of music, here. Can you spot them? There are two distinct parts or musical lines in the LH, and two in the RH. Four different parts, or strands of music,

### ABILITY RATING

Late Beginner

### KEY

D minor

### TEMPO

*Ziemlich langsam*  
(rather slow)

### STYLE

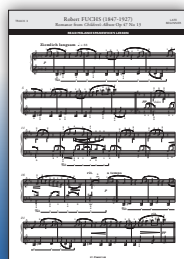
Late-Romantic

### WILL IMPROVE

- ✓ Cantabile
- ✓ Legato
- ✓ Pedalling

### LEARNING TIP

Guard against too much rubato: small 'pull-ups' at the ends of phrases should be all you need.



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are akin to a short contrapuntal or polyphonic phrase. Be sure to play each of the voices, or each part, with a legato touch, holding the notes carefully to the end of each beat as required. The music offers a sense of resolution at bars 16-17 before returning to the original theme.

**A cantabile touch coupled with a smooth legato will be necessary throughout.** This is crucial in the RH melodic line during the opening and closing sections. In the middle section, between bars 9-15, the LH's quavers/dotted minim motive should act as a duet with the RH's 'answering' crotchets. Make sure to observe the *dolce* marking.

**Be sure to 'match' the tonal colour in the thematic material as much as possible where the melody occurs.** This is especially important for the dotted crotchet/quaver note patterns in the RH melody in bars 1-8 and 18-25. The repeated As in the LH accompaniment in bars 1-8 also require resonance and sonority in order to underpin the harmony.

**Take note of the fingering.** Some has been added to the score, and whilst it's possible to substitute the RH fingers at bars 11 and 12, I have suggested a 5-4-5 for the D-C#-B on beats 2, 3 and 4 of bar 11. This involves turning the top of your hand, so that the fifth finger can 'join' the B after the fourth has played the C#. This will require a loose and relaxed hand and wrist, but it does work well after some concentrated practice.

**In terms of dynamics, Romance is mostly soft.** The climax at bar 15 might be effective with a *mezzo forte* dynamic, but not much more than that. The sustaining pedal plays a large role: I've been quite specific about marking this in the score but ultimately your ears will alert you to any 'smudging'. If clarity is an issue, be prepared to 'flutter' a little more, or release the pedal more frequently. ■

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