



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Annie Jeng presents:

“Cortège” from *Trois morceaux* by Lili Boulanger

Preparation and Presentation

Context: pieces that are helpful to have experienced or played before approaching this one

- Claude Debussy: “The Snow Is Dancing” from *Children's Corner*
- Mélanie (Mel) Bonis: *Bourrée*
- Manuel de Falla: *Canción*
- Francis Poulenc: *Improvisation No. 1*

Get Ready: creative activities to explore before the first encounter with the score, to prepare a student for deeper engagement and more immediate success

- Can you imagine an image or story that would go along with the title of the piece? What kind of cortège or parade/procession is this music depicting?
- Listen to a recording of this piece and move/dance to the pulse. Do you feel 1 or 2 beats per measure?
- Listen to some Spanish music and become familiar with the Phrygian Spanish mode.
- What are the characteristics of the whole tone scale in the piece (mm. 44-45)?
- Listen to the arrangement for violin and piano. How does this arrangement with the melody on violin influence your interpretation of the melody played on piano?

Initial Focus: features to pay attention to first; priority steps in reading and absorbing the music

- Make sure that you translate and understand all of the musical French markings.
- Be aware of all of the tempo changes. Remember that the fluidity in tempo is similar to how we change our speed of speech when we speak, ask questions, or engage in conversations.
- Tempo changes are also often connected to interesting harmonic changes.

Coordination Essentials: physical skills and drills for common technical challenges in the piece

- Practice the sixteenth-note accompaniment of the main theme slowly, making sure that the arm and wrist are behind the fingers as each note is played. Avoid stretching or keeping the pinky/thumb extended.
- Isolate the thumb of the right hand with the left-hand accompaniment to ensure consistent and even sixteenth notes in the main theme accompaniment.
- Practice without pedal to work on clarity and only add pedal where needed for color and warmth in the sound.

- Listen carefully for balance of the melody with the accompaniment, especially in the middle section when the melody is in the left hand.

Expressivity: ideas to connect with the expressive and musical nature of the piece

- Considering that the marking of the melody is *léger et gai*, maintain a sense of lightness, joy, and air in the piece.
- How can you use pedaling, dynamics, and pedaling to create color changes based on harmonies (ex. B Major to F-sharp Minor in measures 8-9)?
- Notice and locate where the louder dynamics are located in the piece (contrasting middle section and coda).

Look Forward: approaches to set up for success with refinements that will need attention a few weeks down the road

- Listen for balance so that the melody is the superstar at the forefront of the texture.
- Pace dynamics carefully so that *crescendos* and *diminuendos* are executed gradually.
- Experiment with different timings of the *cédez*, *accel.*, *rit.*, *pressez un peu*, etc. so that they are natural and with taste.