



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Ziyue Gao presents:

At the Smithy, Op. 8 No. 5 by Samuel Maykapar

Preparation and Presentation

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

- Any piece that has fast *staccato* notes under level 5.
- Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Album for the Young* to play lyrical pieces with difficult phrasing.
- Any piece in 6/8 under level 5.

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

- For rhythm, teachers can have students play 6/8 rhythm patterns with instruments such as drums, bells, and tambourine. These patterns can consist of eighth, sixteenth, and dotted quarter notes.
- Show students a video of a smith working.
- Have students design their own exercises in various five finger patterns with different articulations and dynamics.
- To practice leaps, have your student play a leap on the piano and then freeze. When the teacher claps, the student will need to move quickly to the next position.

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

- ABA form.
- Alternating between eighth and sixteenth notes.
- Hand position changes.

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

- *Staccato*, which can be practiced in five finger patterns.
- Voice a single note of an interval. Practice it as a melodic interval first, playing the two keys at different depths.
- Unconventional accents, which can be tested by tapping on the piano lid.

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

- Transition clearly between different characters.
- Bring out all accents.
- Highlight dynamic changes like *crescendos*.

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

- Practice with a metronome: in the refining stage, students will need to speed up.
- Train your fingers every day. Students need specially designed exercises to target *staccato*, double thirds, and voicing chords.
- Use interleaved practice to memorize. There are similar parts in this piece, such as the beginning and the end. Students can practice them back to back instead of practicing in the order of ABA.