



# Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

**Ziyue Gao presents:**

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

## Process and Practice

**Fully present:** tips for maintaining focus and engagement over time

- Choose a goal for every practice session.
- Include three things in practice: define the problem, choose strategies for solving it,, and evaluate your practice. Consider whether you made progress.
- Vary your practice techniques.
- Creativity in practice sometimes comes when you are not playing piano, and sometimes comes when you are. Grasp it whenever it comes.

**Break it up:** useful practice segments; how to connect them and plug them back into the whole

- Since this is an ABA' form, practice the A sections first. Pay attention to the differences between them for ease of memorization.
- Use interleaved practice: practice A and A' back to back from memory.
- Practice section B by practicing the *staccato* notes alone in five finger patterns, as demonstrated in the video.
- Ensure you keep a consistent tempo across sections.

**Layers and outlines:** tips for focusing on how the parts makeup the whole

- Practice in sections first.
- To unite the piece as a whole, pay attention to the transitions between the shifting characters.
- Make sure the tempo is steady when transitioning to the next section.

**Achieving flow:** ideas for finding and maintaining tempo, managing modifications artistically

- Use a metronome for checking tempo.
- Subdivide the beat when playing.
- *Staccato* notes tend to rush. Practice them in context with the metronome.

**Make it mine:** tips for developing and refining a personal, internal sense of the piece

- In late stages, consider taking a break from listening to recordings.
- Make your own decisions around dynamics.
- Find the climax of the piece and play it in your own way.

**Deep knowing:** tips for securing memory

- Solid memory relies highly on daily practice with effective strategies.
- Isolate the hard spots, simplify it to the bare minimum, and then gradually add on until it's in the original form.
- In practice, find patterns and take them out of the piece. For example, practice *staccato* notes first with five finger patterns.

**Final stages:** tips for ensuring performance readiness, maintaining freshness and spontaneity, and reinforcing an expressive personal connection

- In the final stage, continue implementing slow practice.
- Practice with a metronome.