



# Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

**Qiwen Wan presents:**

## **Variations on a Russian Folksong, Op. 51 by Dimitri Kabalevsky**

### **Preparation and Presentation**

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

- *24 Pieces for Children*, Op. 39 by Dimitri Kabalevsky
- “Theme and Variation” from Op. 300 by Louis Kohler
- Russian Folksong, Op. 107, No. 3 by Ludwig van Beethoven
- Variations on a Russian Folksong by Isaak Berkovich

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

- Explore the form
- Listen to a Russian folksong and learn the tune
- Practice an F Major five-finger pattern with legato and staccato articulations
- Practice an F Major scale in both hands
- Improvise a piece in the key of F Major using different articulations

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

- Describe the way the theme is transformed in each variation
- Identify the character of each variation
- Review articulation markings, sound, and touch/approach to the keyboard

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

- Theme: play bass and soprano together, listening for the dialogue
- Variation 1: listen for lightness in the staccato notes, map/choreograph left-hand leaps, and use gestures for fingering changes on fast repeated notes
- Variation 2: listen to the theme move between the hands
- Variation 3: use a gentle down-up motion for the two-note slurs
- Variation 4: use broken-chord practice for voicing the chords, “ghost” play to balance hands, and give weight/stress to the tenuto notes
- Variation 5: bring out accents with gesture; add accent pedal to ending chords

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

- How does the title connect to the character of the work?
- Play the melody with “vocal” shaping in each variation and throughout the work
- Capture a different “scene” or setting with each variation

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

- Secure the gestures used to play two-note slurs, accents, staccato, and tenuto notes
- Practice each section slowly and listen for clarity
- Imagine a color palette and give each variation a different color