



# Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

*A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource*

**Qiwen Wan presents:**

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

### **Process and Practice**

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

- Sequence new material carefully, focusing on one variation at a time
- Ensure correct technique, fingering, articulation, and dynamics
- Practice at the given tempi, and match them to the character of each variation
- Capture the character and “color change” of each variation

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

- Learn in sections first, such as beginning only with the theme and first variation
- Make a practice plan for each variation, building in review of previous variations
- When learning a new variation, return first to the theme and connect it to the variation
- Find variations with similar articulations, characteristics, and dynamics, etc. and practice them back-to-back

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

- Analyze the harmonies and structure of the theme
- Find cadence points and identify/label them
- Compare the varied themes in every variation and detail these changes

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

- Encourage metronome use to help student play in tempo
- Ask the student to conduct while the teacher performs
- Find the most challenging moments in the piece and set the tempo based on these moments

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

- Sing the theme and feel the shape/phrasing of the melody
- Ask the student to describe each variation in three words
- Add dynamics to variations 4 and 5 to create more shaping
- Use pedal to accent the chords at the end to provide a more robust, orchestral finale
- Encourage the student to create their own variation

**Deep knowing:** tips for securing memory

- Memorize left-hand accompanying figures alone for security in variations 4 and 5

- Divide each section into smaller parts based on the phrase structure (e.g., theme into measures 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12)
- Play the variations in random order from memory

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

- Practice at different tempi
- Perform in a group class
- Collect feedback from friends and family
- Record and self-assess