



# Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

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## Ricardo de la Torre presents: Intermezzo No. 1 by Manuel Ponce

### Process and Practice

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

- Start at different spots in the piece, either from memory or with the music, to test and maintain focus. At first, choose obvious places like the beginnings of sections, and gradually choose more and more difficult places to begin.
- Purposefully create distractions while playing to be ready for the out-of-control events that might happen during a performance. For instance, ask a family member to make noise at some point during the run-through, such as turning on the radio or having a phone ring.
- Experiment with wildly different interpretations to keep the piece fresh and discover new possibilities in the piece.

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

- Take mm. 31-38 and practice them in groups or rhythms, then apply a similar procedure to mm. 24-32. Then, practice the entire section as written, starting a couple of bars before and ending a few bars later.

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

- Create a formal diagram as discussed in the Preparation and Presentation document.

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

- To find a good basic tempo for the whole, play or sing mm. 16-21 and get the pulse for the quarter note. Then, apply it to the theme at m. 8. Choose a flowing tempo that is not too slow but still allows you to speed up in the middle section while executing the sextuplets clearly.
- Apply subtle *rubato* at the “micro” level. Discreet small pulls and pushes of the tempo, aiding the anacrusis-like nature of the theme, will fit the music well. Avoid exaggerations or extreme fluctuations in the tempo. Ponce’s own playing was quite straightforward when it came to tempo matters.

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

- Listen to the piece and live with it for a little while before starting to work on it, then forget about the recordings.

- Get to know more of Ponce's early piano music, like the first few mazurkas or some of his songs to help form an interpretation of this piece.

**Deep knowing:** tips for securing memory

- Memorize the LH alone. This is not too hard, as it has fewer notes than the RH and follows strong harmonic patterns.
- Block and be conscious of the circle of fifths progression in mm. 24-28.
- Be able to start at any of the major junctures of the piece by memory.

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

- Once the piece is in the performance-ready stage, play complete run-throughs to test the grasping of the whole, endurance, and concentration.
- Play several run-throughs in a row to improve stamina and readiness. Experiment with spontaneity and changing things on the spot, if it feels right. Follow this with a "clean-up" session to fine-tune places that did not go as desired.