



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Lark Powers presents: Sonata in A Major by Marianna Martines

Process and Practice

Fully present: tips for maintaining focus and engagement over time

- Record oneself often, at least every few days; engaging in this during the learning process may take away unwanted pressure surrounding “perfect” performances
- Listen back to recordings, take notes, and craft a practice plan based on observations
- Perform (and record) a run-through performance to assess performance readiness
- Focus on the character and mood while working on technical challenges
- Imagine a descriptive and detailed story or scene to engage the mind and maintain mindful practicing
- Sing one hand and play the other; switch
- Play in slow motion by memory to ensure muscle memory isn’t taking over and the intellect is remaining engaged
- Keep practice goals small and manageable, so they can be realistically achieved
- Focus on one specific element at a time in practice; vary these elements each day

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

- Identify difficulties and challenge spots in the music; extract them from the piece and drill them in small sections
- Once small sections are mastered, reincorporate them into a longer phrase without hesitation
- Avoid negative self-talk regarding difficulties
- Work backward by beat groupings, always going to the next downbeat
- Isolate thumb crossings, focusing on one or two notes both before and after the shift
- In large jumps/shifts, work to play over the bar line

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

- Focus on bringing out the contrasting moods of each movement
- Listen to Martines’s other two keyboard sonatas (in E Major and G Major), creating a list of attributes that contribute to her unique compositional style; contrast these to other sonatas written in Vienna around the same time (1765)

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

- Begin with a slow tempo, incorporating all nuances from the early stages
- Find the tempo the student can play without error

- Increase the tempo gradually each day through the use of the metronome
- Practice fast to play fast: select the most difficult passages and work on them at performance tempo in tiny “bursts” or impulse groupings
- Change metronome practice to clicking only once every two measures to build the student’s internal sense of pulse
- Sing and march around the room to internalize the pulse
- Record a performance and conduct while listening back
- Count hyper meter aloud to feel pulse and group the various note values

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

- Since this piece lacks written dynamics, the student has the opportunity to create a truly unique performance; to foster creativity, develop different versions for repeats
- Be creative with ornamentation (as long as it fits within the style)
- Frequently record performances and listen back
- Write in the music! Keep track of ideas, feedback, practice strategies, etc. on the score
- Ensure every note and gesture have been planned, then evaluate the success of executing these musical ideas

Deep knowing: tips for securing memory

- Continually engage intellectual memory, not just muscle memory
- Analyze the piece by section and key area
- Memorize the left hand alone
- Block harmonies and identify them
- Identify and learn “memory stations,” or moments in the piece the student can jump to at any given moment
- Map each movement of the sonata graphically, including visual cues such as lead sheet symbols, form indications, labels for different phrases, arrows, graphic shapes that represent gestures, etc.
- Engage in mental practice: visualize the score and gestures of the hands and audiate the sound

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

- Emphasize the differences between movements
- Each day try one new strategy or way of practicing to keep the music fresh
- Continue recording performances
- Practice performing by playing start to finish without stopping
- Return to the early learning stage practice strategies to remind the student what is special and unique about the work
- Sight read pieces in a similar style, selecting an appropriate level for the student
- Return to hands separate practice, slow practice, and drill practice