



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Kate Acone presents:

***The Easy Winners* by Scott Joplin**

Preparation and Presentation

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

- *Elite Syncopations*, Scott Joplin
- *Hot Potato Rag*, Martha Mier
- “Sweet Mister Jelly Roll” from *Portraits in Jazz*, Valerie Capers
- Any piece that uses A-flat-major chords/scales

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

- An “easy winner” is an athlete who blows away the competition. What about the piece could suggest that?
- Introductory improvisation: play a stride bass pattern based on measure 5 while the student improvises on A-flat major chord tones.
- Teach a syncopated rhythm by rote, then try improvising just one note at a time using that rhythm.

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

- Loosely speaking, this piece has an ABACD form. What do the sections have in common with each other?
- Notice that the C and D sections are in D-flat major.

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

- For accuracy in the LH, practice the outside leaps before adding in inner notes. For example, practice jumping from the bass pinky (Ab) to the top thumb (middle C) in m. 5 until that feels comfortable.
- Invest time early to pick fingerings that are comfortable for your hand. This will save you much trouble down the road!
- Practice octaves thumbs-only to save extra practice with a stretched hand.
- Use a down-up wrist motion for RH two-note slurs.

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

- Play the RH melody with just the top line to hear the shape and decide on phrasing.
- Take out the syncopations and play the rhythm straight. When you add the rhythm back in, does it change your perception of important notes?
- Capitalize on your ability to play the B and C sections legato to contrast with the A section.

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

- Test your ability to balance your hands by ghosting the LH while you play the RH.
- Try singing the RH melody while playing just the LH.