



# Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

**Laura Amoriello Presents:**

## **“Arabesque” from 3 Klavierstücke by Josephine Lang**

### **Preparation and Presentation**

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

- Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: “Reverie” from *Album for the Young*
- Robert Schumann: “Little Romance” from *Album for the Young*

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

- Discover: What is an arabesque? It is a ballet position with the body in profile, supported on one leg, while the other leg extends behind it. This is based on early Islamic art featuring ornamental scrolls that interlace. You and your student might look for images of both before playing the piece. How does an arabesque relate to the multi-voice texture of the piece?
- Discover: Who was Josephine Lang? She was a German composer who lived 1815-1880. Her teachers included Felix Mendelssohn and Ferdinand Hiller. Lang composed lieder for solo voice and piano music, as well as two choral works.

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

- Notice the form (A-B-A1) and key structure of the piece: The A and A1 sections are in F Major, while the B section is written in A-flat Major and F Minor. For this reason, you might divide the middle section into two parts—B (m. 16) and B1 (m. 36).
- Circle all accidentals, dynamics, and clef changes. You might use different colors for a helpful visual cue.
- Be sure you know the translation of all expressive markings! For example, *lasingando* = sweet.
- Explore the layers of the piece. As an alternative to hands separate sight-reading, for example, you might play the soprano, bass, and middle voices separately and in combinations of two. You can also block the right hand to hear the harmonic structure.

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

- Warm up with scales and arpeggios in F Major, A-flat Major, and F Minor.
- This piece utilizes a short-short-long phrase structure, providing convenient practice units. For each phrase, practice blocking the right hand to get comfortable with shifts and hear the harmonies. (You can do the same for the left hand in the middle section at mm. 20-22 and 28-34).

- When you are ready, block hands together. This is especially useful for the more challenging phrases, such as mm. 28-36 in the B-section, which includes accidentals and frequent position changes.
- Continuing to take one phrase at a time, slowly practice “springing” into the top note while keeping the inner voices soft. As you increase the tempo, you can minimize the springing motion but keep a firm fingertip for clear voicing.

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

- Observe all dynamics, articulation, and expressive markings, from hands separate through hands together phases.
- The short-short-long phrase structure also provides expressive guidance: Follow the *crescendo-decrescendo* markings and keep singing! Vocalizing the top voice will guide you in how you might like to phrase.
- Notice the half-steps in the left hand throughout, which can be phrased with a slight *decrescendo*: pickup into m. 1, mm. 2-3, mm. 8-9, mm. 10-11, mm. 12-13, m. 17, mm. 36-37.

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

- Generally, changing the pedal on each beat will provide clarity. Depending on your instrument and the acoustics of the space, you might change less frequently, especially at drops to low bass notes (mm. 18, 28, and 38, for example). Keep listening for clarity and pedal tastefully. Your teacher can help you!
- Continue to engage with the layers of the piece throughout the preparation, practice, and performance stages. Keep singing the top voice to guide your phrasing. Play combinations of voices, and for a special challenge, play one voice while singing another! Can you see how the layers of this piece might represent an arabesque?