



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

David Cartledge presents:

Gavotte in G Major, HWV 491 ("Rigaudon") by George Frideric Handel

Preparation and Presentation

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

- Kabalevsky - *Clowns*, op. 39, no. 20
- J. S. Bach (attrib.) - Musette in D, BWV Anh. 26
- Turk – *The Dancing Master*

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

- Practice the walking bass touch across scales and octaves.
- Pretend to have "vibrato" at the piano, to approximate a cello.
- Look at videos of people dancing historical gavottes online (Some of them are pretty funny).
- Practice movement around the keyboard through opening and closing of the hand.

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

- Understand that the piece is, above all, a dance.
- Try to get a feel for the "danciness" from the movement of the LH.
- Figure out what chords are being implied, and notice how often they change.

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

- A buoyant touch is crucial. Groundedness of the LH, but with suppleness and flexibility of release.
- Each note is released in the direction of the next.
- The two-note slurs in the RH require separate practice.
- This is a great piece for students to discover that repeated notes often use different fingers—let them understand why from the articulation.

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

- The piece is a blank slate--Handel left us just a few articulations, and no dynamics.
- With so few directions from Handel, students can "make the piece their own", choosing dynamics and emphases that make sense to them
- Clear the score of editorial markings, and let the student be their own editor.

- Let students discover what "story" they want to tell, and encourage them to use dynamics and articulations to tell it.

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

- Control of tempo and "dance feel" is really important. Students need to always feel that this is a dance.
- It shouldn't be too fast, or, as my old teacher used to say, "their wigs might fall off!"
- Maintaining buoyancy and refinement of the LH is an ongoing challenge.