



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

John S. Ellis presents:

Knecht Ruprecht op.68 no.12 (“Knight Rupert”) by Robert Schumann

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

- Burgmüller Ballade (Magrath Level 4): Provides work on keeping sixteenth notes even in the LH (with RH eighth note chords accompanying them) and also provides work with keeping hands together when playing sixteenth notes. Similar effect as in Knecht Ruprecht at an earlier level.
- Heller's Avalanche (RCM Level 4, Magrath Level 6): Provides practice in playing fluid passagework following accentuated notes as well as strong, chord playing.
- Burgmüller Tarantella (Magrath Level 6): Provides practice keeping hands together in the unison passage at the beginning; also offers practice performing two-note slurs in the RH.

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

- Find web resources that tell different stories about Knecht Ruprecht throughout history.
- Find web resources to see different pictorial representations of Knecht Ruprecht.
- Ask the student to come up with their own story after having read some of the above.

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

- Perform the piece for the student several times while they read the score. Ask them to note different aspects each time (i.e. pedal, voicing, dynamics, phrase shaping, etc.).
- Perform the piece for the student while they develop their own narrative. Have them direct your playing (i.e. softer, louder, faster) and experiment with playing to help them come up with their aesthetic judgments earlier in the process.

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

- Five finger scale patterns and full scales, hands together in the keys represented in the piece, and at the performance tempo (sixteenth notes). Focus on keeping hands together.
- Five finger patterns and full scales in two-note slurs at the performance tempo (eighth notes). Focus on keeping the hands together.
- Rotation in contrary motion (as required in the B section) in thirds, ascending through the scale, repeating each rotating third at least 4 times. Focus on the clarity and ease of the rotation and keeping the hands together.

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

- Isolate and practice different types of "fierce" cadences at the ends of phrases in the A section. Have them try different approaches to voicing, staccato and accents and work with them to make each one different.

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

- After the above has been gone over, present a practice plan to have them learn each phrase by heart one or two weeks at a time while practicing the next phrase hands apart at a slow tempo.
- Make sure that all musical and theoretical elements are integrated in the technical approach.

- Resources cited for leveling: Jane Magrath, *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* (Alfred Music: 1995); *Royal Conservatory of Music Piano Syllabus, 2015 edition* (Frederick Harris Music: 2015)
- Resources for information on the legendary character Knecht Ruprecht:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knecht_Ruprecht; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Companions_of_Saint_Nicholas; <https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Knecht+Ruprecht>