



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Clavier Companion subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Kristina Henckel presents:

Minuet No. 1 from *Six Minuets for Piano* by Maria Szymanowska

Process and Practice

Fully present: Tips for maintaining focus and engagement over time

- Practice the Minuet and Trio as two individual pieces
- Select a specific musical aspect to experiment with
- Exaggerate and/or reverse
 - Dynamics
 - When playing hands in unison, swap emphasis between hands
 - Emphasize the LH accompaniment – you may find hidden notes/sound which will add sound color to your performance
 - Articulation
 - Swap *legato* for *staccato* and vice versa
 - Can you play a different sounding *staccato*?
 - Embellishments – start on the upper note or the lower note
 - Tempo – Character
 - Can you make the dances sound like a lullaby?

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

- Identify star spots and practice according to the level of difficulty:
 - 3* - most difficult – most time required to master
 - 2* - medium difficulty
 - 1* - quick fix
- Use a drill to fix the star spots:
 - Rhythmic variations for even eight notes
 - Variable note groupings for embellishments or phrases
 - Prep/play – to secure clean shifts and transitions between passages and chords
 - For unison passages, play one hand and ghost (pretend play)
 - Voicing exercises for harmonic intervals and chords
- Remember
 - The smaller the star spot, the better the chance of a quick and permanent fix
 - Many times, only one or two notes or fingers are misbehaving
 - Once the star spot is fixed, add sections together

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

- Bring back the dancing characters
- Review repeated material within each subsection and practice the differences
- What are similarities and differences between the Minuet and the Trio?

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

- Use metronome for consistent tempo before you internalize it
 - Treat each section as a new beginning and use the same metronome routine
 - Use the metronome at the beginning of each section to match tempos
- Remember:
 - The stylistic phrasing of this piece requires slight *rubatos* (time stretch) at the phrase endings
 - Do not forget about the *ritardando* in section d of the Trio

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

- Create your story of the piece
- Record yourself and listen while following the score
- Can you find your story in your recorded performance?

Deep knowing: Tips for securing memory

- Practice memorization by section
 - Identify difficult spots and practice them backwards
 - Perfect the phrase endings before the return of the main (repeated) material
- Solidify fingering
 - Silent practice
 - Ghosting one hand while the other plays
 - Bring back the initial harmonic premise
 - Reduce the score – label the scales and patterns
- Clean up the articulation
- Exaggerate your expression – dynamics, tempo – be dramatic!
- Practice each section in at least 3 different tempi

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

- Perform your piece in front of your parent or friends without any prior warm-up
- Play the hardest section of the piece without any warm-up just after you wake up
- Perform your piece on different pianos
- Take time to hear the beginning of your piece in your head
- Practice a “get in the zone” routine
- Practice with the same shoes you will be wearing during the official performance
- Practice the bowing and walking on the stage
- Record yourself
- Perform your story