



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Ivan Hurd presents: Ivan Sings by Aram Katchaturian

Preparation and Presentation

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

- William Bolcom *The Plaid Miss* from Monsterpieces
- Dmitri Kabalevsky *Little Story*, Op. 27, No. 2
- Alexander Gretchaninoff *Farewell*, Op. 98, No. 4

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

- Play a descending chromatic scale in the LH incorporating a similar range from the piece. Build upon this by adding thirds as found in the accompaniment, and then the inverted chromatic sixths using the same notes from the second half of the piece.
- Improvise RH melodies using c minor, E-flat Major, and f minor five-finger patterns from the piece.
- Play various harmonies from the piece as blocked chords: major chords (F, G, B-flat), minor chords (c, g, f, b-flat, e-flat, a-flat), diminished chords (a, g, b), augmented (A-flat), and various seventh chords (F7 and A half-diminished).
- Count aloud and clap-back syncopated rhythms. Play syncopated rhythms using the same intervals from the piece.

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

- Practice smooth, legato pedal connections with the LH only. Say aloud when the pedal changes occur.
- Focus on a beautiful legato line with vocal phrasing. Listen for the decay of the long notes in the RH melody.
- Balance of the hands; the LH should bring out the changing chromatic harmony, yet not overpower the singing RH melody.

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

- Make sure to find a comfortable position in mm. 14-15 and 26-27 when the hands are overlapping. The LH can be closer to the fall board as it is on the black keys and over the RH, which can be closer to the edge of the keys for maximum comfort.
- Much of the melodic content in the RH is built upon oscillating 2nds which is a great opportunity to focus on rotation.

- In m. 18, focus on moving the RH out of the way so the LH can re-attack the C. Practice the LH syncopated rhythm until it becomes automatic.
- The balance of texture in the LH in mm. 18-25 can be challenging. Students can ghost play the thumb to make sure it is not too loud.
- To assist with good balance between hands, the student and teacher can trade off playing various parts. Additionally, the teacher could play on the students' shoulders to help the student feel the difference in weight between the hands.

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

- Sing and play the RH melody simultaneously.
- Sing the RH melody while playing the LH accompaniment only.
- Perhaps have students write lyrics to accompany the melody as they sing along. This will help develop imagery for the piece.
- Students can dance or move around the room to feel the push and pull of the rubato of the piece as the teacher plays. The movement will help students to internalize the phrasing.

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

- Continue to listen for clarity of texture and balance of melody and accompaniment.
- Focus on the subtleties of pedal changes and experiment with a variety of pedal depths and the occasional use of the soft pedal.
- Try performing at a variety of tempos and explore different uses of rubato. This will ensure the performance remains fresh and flexible.
- Record the piece to see if it sound the way you hear it while playing. Recording can help students discover areas for further refinement.