



# Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

**Lia Jensen-Abbott presents:**

## ***Down a Southern Lane* by Florence Price**

### **Process and Practice**

**Fully Present:** tips for maintaining focus and engagement over time

- Work on both micro-details and larger structural units. Work on specific beats for technical/musical security one day, then another day practice a whole phrase.
- Spend time in a practice session listening for consistent tone in all voices. This can be done, for instance, in m. 5 to hear all voices clearly, but with the melody voiced.
- In all phases of practice, devote time to count-singing at various rhythmic levels in all sections.

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

- A section: find and locate all melody notes, ex. mm. 1-2. Voice the E-flat by isolating between the hands, singing, and then adding voices in the RH for balance.
- All sections: pedaling drills. Speak the pedal coordination by saying “up-down.”
- B section: practice LH shifting in mm. 27-42 within four bar phrases. Block silently. Work on RH finger preparation in the second half of each phrase slowly.
- Coda: learn both endings and choose which one best fits your narrative concept.

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

- Once all phrases are learned slowly, fluently, and accurately, use the concept of an extra practice measure to work on shifts within and between difficult phrases. See the video for an example.
- Work with a metronome slowly, one phrase at a time, count-singing out loud. The metronome can be used in all sections to help students internalize tempo. Count-singing helps as well.
- Have the student conduct phrases and sections away from the piano to physically understand the differences in tempo between parts.

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

- Concept of dynamic tiers: work on fine-tuning dynamic inflections within each phrase, then transfer to the overall section’s musical decisions. For example, in the B section, all four phrases could be one large *crescendo*.

- Once the piece is in a fluent and accurate stage of learning, it is now a good time to go back to practicing in small segments for security. Isolate phrases for finger legato, balance between all voices in the texture, and drill shifts.
- Begin to work the transitions between sections by first conducting away from the piano, then having the student conduct the teacher, then having the student play and pace these moments. Example: mm. 25-26 and mm. 44-47.

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

- Begin the memorization process, if it has not begun already. Work one phrase at a time. The phrase labels will help immensely.
- Continue to count-sing in the A section in subdivisions and divisions of the beat, and in the B section to help control rushing and to maintain rhythmic integrity inside each beat.
- Discuss with the student how A and B might be motivically related for them to understand unity. Thirds are present in both sections as well as low pedal points, and C is prominent from the first chord as a foreshadowing of the B section key area.

**Deep knowing:** tips for securing memory

- Continue memory work one phrase at a time by striving to play each phrase 3-4 times in a row perfectly.
- Be able to start on any phrase in any section at any time. This will secure structural “pick-up” spots if a memory slip occurs.
- Know details about each section: B section LH has a counter chromatic melody in offbeat chords (mm. 27-34), and in the half note chords (mm. 35-38).
- Have the student record themselves performing either the entire piece or large sections from memory 3-5 times in a row for security.

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

- Have the student record a performance in the lesson and then ask the student to assume the role of teacher and critique the performance.
- The student could revisit their original narrative and listen to several recorded performances to make sure they are satisfied with their interpretation, or if anything needs to be changed.
- Practice performance situations are always helpful. Have the students play for family, over google meets, or for friends, school, or church situations.
- Return to basics: go back to some HS drills in all sections, count-sing one phrase at a time to maintain solid tempo, and practice slowly to keep fingers and mind engaged.