



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Hannah Roberts presents:

Five Scottish Folk Songs: I. "Land o' the Leal," V. "Eilidh Bhan" by Helen Hopekirk

Preparation and Presentation

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

- Mendelssohn, Songs without Words Op. 38 No. 6 "Duetto"
- Debussy, "La fille aux cheveux de lin"
- Grieg, "Notturmo" Op. 54 No. 4
- MacDowell, "From Uncle Remus" from Woodland Sketches

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

- Survey Scottish culture by exploring photographs of Scottish landscapes and learning about Scotland's history
- Learn about Scottish folk music by reading Helen Hopekirk's introduction to *Seventy Scottish Songs* (available on IMSLP or in print through Dover Publications).
- Listen to recordings of authentic Scottish folk performances.

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

- Create a map for the piece by labeling the introduction, stanza(s), and coda.
- Note transitional passages, repetition of material, and key or modality changes.
- Take time to intentionally select efficient fingering. Encourage the student to try out various fingerings and select what fits their hand best.

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

- Rapid hand position shifts require dexterity.
- Rolled chords spanning tenths need well-planned pedaling.
- To practice RH multi-voice textures, create engaging technical drills in which the student sustains chord tones with RH 1-2 while playing a moving melodic line with RH 3-4-5.

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

- Explore the lyrics for these folk songs, provided in Hopekirk's *Seventy Scottish Songs*. Imagine scenes and emotions to accompany the lyrics.

- Search for ways Hopekirk depicts the text through musical techniques. For example, a descending chromatic bass line in “Land o’ the Leal,” m.45-49, captures the sorrow of a painful goodbye.
- Sing along while playing the melody to discover how a vocalist might shape the melody.
- Note transitions between phrases or sections where the music will need to “breathe.”

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

- Practice without the damper pedal, checking for correct articulation. Avoid relying solely on the pedal to create a legato effect.
- When incorporating the pedal in practice, listen for melodic clarity. Also, be careful to avoid blurred harmonies.
- Be sure fingering choices allow for an even melodic tone, with a smooth transfer of weight from one note to the next.