



# Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

*A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource*

**Stephanie Leon Shames presents:**

## **Melodie in C-sharp Minor, Op. 4, No. 2 by Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel**

### **Preparation and Presentation**

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

- Pieces that have a melody line over a simple bass harmony.
- Pieces that have more than one voice represented in one hand, pre level 9 (for example: Bach Little Preludes and Fugues or movements from French Suites).

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

- Listen to a Baroque trio sonata, especially focusing on the role of the cello in supporting and shaping the bass line.
- Listen to choral works and try to hear the soprano, alto, tenor, or bass lines. Listen for the overall balance and how the parts blend together. Try a barbershop quartet!
- Listen to an aria, paying attention to flexibility of the line.
- Practice scales and arpeggios in C-sharp-minor.

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

- Identify the melody, bass line, and middle voice, which is split between the two hands. Discuss the differentiating qualities (i.e. stems up or down, lengths of notes, etc.)
- See and play the RH melody line alone (top voice only, no middle). See and play the LH bass line alone (without the middle voice). Then play melody and bass together.

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

- LH practice: play slowly, and in the eighth rests make a very quick, yet relaxed lateral motion (straight, economic) to prepare to play the next low bass note. Be sure to touch the bass note BUT wait before actually playing it.
- RH practice: play slowly, and after the eighth notes of the middle voice, try for a smooth connection/legato in the top fingers while releasing the middle voice notes. Take the necessary time to hear this, with the hand relaxed, and no hard pressing down in the fingers.
- Middle voice practice: work for regularity of flow and a continuity of steady 8th notes throughout. Especially pay attention not to rush the third and sixth beats (count "3-1" for each beat, where 3 prepares for 1).

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

- Melodic shaping: pay attention to pick ups, long notes, shorter notes (that seem to circle an important pitch or note), high notes, breathing between melodic phrase bits, phrase beginnings and endings, and how they fit together (do they relax backwards? or flow forward?).
- Bass line: pay attention that the bass line has enough time to sing and sustain the quarter note, like a cello playing each note with a bit of vibrato. Breathe in during the eighth rests.
- Middle voice: because it is the flowing, harmonic support, it should be played with a thinner tone and dynamic than the rest.

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

- Melody: at first, sing/play out the melodic line freely, with a singing tone. Further down the road, try for more subtle shadings based on musical gestures.
- Tempo: play at first in a slow tempo that is nonetheless buoyant and lilting. When ready, try to feel the 6/8 more in 2 and see how this affects everything.
- Pedaling: start with just enough to help sustain the bass note. Refinements will later include subtle movements of the foot (quick "ups" and slow "downs" without clunking) and clean harmonic changes.