



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

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Stephanie Leon Shames presents:

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

Process and Practice

Fully present: tips for maintaining focus and engagement over time

- Work on a limited amount of ideas at any one time (whether it's singing tone, tempo, flow, etc.). Start with larger goals and then refine as progress is made.
- Vary the focus of practice sessions, and give positive reinforcement as change happens.
- Encourage singing, or humming the different voices. The basic rhythm and approximate shape of the line is more important than accurate pitches. Note where natural breathing might happen.

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

- Isolate the top, middle, and bass lines. Play them alone and then in pairs while working to hear the interaction between voices.
- Practice playing both hands of the middle voice together as a block of harmony. Encourage hearing harmonies in a line or string, rather than just one after another, and shape them accordingly.
- Isolate the LH and practice quick, lateral movements in the eighth rests. The movement should be very relaxed, yet quick and close to the keys.

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

- Practice or learn in 12 bar phrases/sections. Notice how the phrases are constructed - the number of bars, shape of the smaller bits in the melodic line - and the different qualities in each phrase.
- Clarify the overall ABA structure of the piece and try to create a mental image (can be visual and aural).
- Assign a specific type of sound for each of the 3 voices, such as rich, thinner, or ringing. Maybe choose instruments as inspiration!

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

- Experiment with the tempo and flow. Trying to make different tempi "work" is extremely good practice for developing the ear. A slow tempo should sound convincing and not like a practice tempo. A faster tempo may help to hear phrasing better.
- Listen carefully to be sure there is a regularity and lilt to the 16th notes throughout the piece, even through the longer notes, without sounding metronomic. Beware of unintentional accents, especially on beat 1 of each bar.

- Practice hearing long notes sustaining and don't let them die. Imagine a crescendo or decrescendo while holding long notes, then join the next note at that level.

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

- Sing the top line, or any line, away from the piano. Notice how much time is needed to inhale and liken it to the playing. Breathing makes it personal.
- Decide if each new bit of the phrase should be played at a lower or higher volume than where it left off. These decisions also help continuity.
- Attach a character or attitude to dynamic markings, rather than a static level. Create a narrative that supports the differences between the A and B sections, and the return of the melody.

Deep knowing: tips for securing memory

- Working with the voices - individually and in combination - aids memory. The study of the harmonies in the A and B section does as well.
- Have a visual sense of the whole piece. Know where you are in the phrase.

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

- Focus on the immediacy of listening while playing. Respond to the sounds as you play.
- Practicing in a variety of ways and being open to different options helps the student to feel more comfortable with whatever comes up in performance.
- The student should connect to the inner emotion or attitude for each phrase or section and live that feeling as they play.
- Focus on sharing the beauty of the music, rather than the performer aspect of it.
- Practice for clean pedal changes on each harmonic change.