



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A *Piano Magazine* subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Mengyu Song presents: *The Sad Waltz* by Yoshinao Nakada

Preparation and Presentation

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

- *The Ice Skaters* (Waldteufel, arr. Faber) from *Piano Adventures Lesson Book 2B*
- *Waltz*, Op. 39, No. 13 by Kabalevsky
- *Stomp Dance* by Jon George

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

- Discuss the history of the waltz and explore the dance steps
- Improvise a right-hand melody with a two-note slur followed by a staccato note (modeled by teacher) in four-bar “question and answer” phrases
- Review intervals (blocked and broken) and chord qualities found in the piece
- Discuss the form of this piece

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

- A section (measures 1-16)
 - Right-hand two-note slur with staccato pattern in shorter phrases
 - Left-hand blocked and broken intervals of a 3rd and 4th
- B section (measures 17-32)
 - Create long phrases with the melody (singing and/or hands separately first)
 - Pay attention to accidentals and holding long notes full value
- A' section (measures 33-48)
 - Notice similarities with the A section
 - Block left-hand intervals and chords
- Coda (measures 49-61)
 - Subdivide the beat in sixteenth notes, eighth notes, and quarter notes
 - Craft long phrases in the left hand

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

- Warm up with F Major and D Minor scales, triads, and inversions
- Practice the two-note slur/staccato pattern while saying, “Down, up, up.”
- Utilize rotation for the broken intervals and broken chords
- Keep arm relaxed and wrist tall for a supported hand

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

- Play “duets” with students to explore the balance of the melody and accompaniment (student plays right hand while the teacher plays left hand, then switch)
- Analyze the key changes in different sections; discuss how this relates to the mood/character
- Discuss the *poco ritardando* (measure 32) and explore different pacing options
- Explore the title—what makes this a sad waltz?
- Experiment with creating different tones and colors on the keyboard

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

- Review pedaling techniques (direct vs. overlapping)
- Shape eight-measure phrases
- Refine balance and voicing, focusing on the tone quality and “colors”
- Secure memorization with a theoretical/harmonic analysis
- Improvise your own “sad waltz” in a minor key.