



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Ann M. Gipson presents:

“The Boys’ Round Dance” from *Children’s Christmas Eve*, Op. 36 by Niels Gade

Process and Practice

Fully present: tips for maintaining focus and engagement over time

- Engage the student with the frequent changing patterns that reflect the changing dance steps.
- Experiment with various dance steps that reflect the music. How do the dance steps and arm motions relate to the music?
- Gradually increase the tempo to feel the music in two beats.

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

- Color code the various sections for quick recognition.
- A section:
 - Practice mm. 1-2 (and mm. 5-6, 31-32) listening for strong accents.
 - Practice mm. 3-4 (and mm. 7-8, 33-34) listening for a rhythmic LH and a RH scale that drives to the top note.
 - Practice mm. 9-11 (and mm. 13-15, 35-37) listening for even rhythm and tone moving from hand to hand.
- B section: Practice mm. 19-30 at a slow tempo exaggerating the articulation of each hand. To work on balance in mm. 19-22, “ghost” play the left hand to imagine a *ppp* sound.

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

- Compare section A (mm. 1-18) with the A1 section (mm. 31-40) and find differences in the final section.
- Explore the mood and character of the various sections using imagery and descriptive words.
- Why does the composer use accents in some passages and not in others? How do the frequent changes of dynamics affect the mood and character?

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

- Avoid rushing the tempo in the ascending scales (mm. 3-4, 7-8, 33-34) and in the broken chord passages (mm. 9-11, 13-15, 23-24, 35-37). Practice these passages with a metronome and gradually increase the tempo. Vary practice in these passages by playing staccato, changing to dotted rhythms, and add-a-note practice.

- Feel 2 strong beats in each measure. In mm. 39-40, feel 3 beats per measure. This gives the piece the feel of a fast, accelerated ending.
- Count measures by groups of 4 to keep the musical line moving forward.
- While playing each section, imagine the dancers moving to the music; sometimes with strong rhythmic movements, other times spinning and moving quickly.

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

- The rests throughout the piece allow the dance to breathe. As you breathe at the end of each section, experiment with various lengths of the rest.
- Explore places to use *rubato*. Experiment with taking time at the transition (mm. 17-18), before the sudden dynamic change in m. 23, before the return of the melody in m. 27 and before the A1 section at m. 31.

Deep knowing: tips for securing memory

- Play slowly from memory.
- Play each hand alone from memory.
- Outline or “map” the musical ideas and be able to start at each location from memory.
- Using the outline, be able to start at the last section (a2) and jump to the next starting location (b1) working backwards.
 - A: a a1 b b transition
 - B: c d c
 - A1: a b1 a2 (codetta)

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

- Continue to practice at a slow tempo, exaggerating dynamics and articulation.
- Practice performing the piece by playing for friends and family.
- Record the performance and listen for a strong, steady beat and clear dynamic changes throughout.
- Ask family or friends to dance to the performance.