



Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

Janka Krajciova presents:
***Chanson, Op. 2, no. 2* by Smetana**

Preparation and Presentation

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

- *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15, no. 1 (R. Schumann)
- Dedication, Op. 1, no. 1 (Granados)
- Arietta, Op. 12, no. 1 (Grieg)
- Dear Sister, Op. 32, no. 14 (Fuchs)

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

- What is a *chanson*? Listen to other pieces with this title (e.g., Tchaikovsky's *Chanson Triste* and Fauré's *Chanson D'Amour*)
- Introduce Bedrich Smetana (1824-1884), the leader of the Czech Nationalist movement, and discuss other works he composed (e.g., "My Country," the famous symphonic poem, and "The Bartered Bride," an opera)
- Play the piece for the student, while they label the form (ABA')
- Have the student identify the climax of the piece

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

- Identify the layered, three-voice texture of the piece
- Block the chords with correct fingering
- Compare the two A sections: how has the right hand changed since the initial presentation of the theme?
- Have the student write out the harmonic progression using chord symbols or Roman Numerals

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

- Play the right-hand melody with any fingering, listening for a singing, legato tone
- Play with the given fingering and focus on the finger substitutions in the A section (ms. 2, ms. 4, ms. 5, etc.) and the unusual finger crossing of 4 over 5 in the B section (ms. 19, ms. 21, etc.)
- Play the left hand alone, using finger pedaling for the fifth finger where possible, while keeping the sixteenth notes in the middle layer light (maintain a fluid circular motion of the wrist)

- Practice the bass and middle layers only, without the right-hand melody; listen for smooth, even sixteenth notes as they pass between the hands

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

- Make up a story to go with this song
- Compose words that match the melodic rhythm and sing along
- Listen for a harmonic “twist” in the story (find the deceptive cadence in ms. 16)—how can you make this a special moment?
- Notice articulation other than slurs—Smetana indicates accents (ms. 23-25) and tenuto (ms. 15-17); discuss the significance of these articulation markings

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

- Subdivide the sixteenth-note triplet accompaniment in the few measures where we “lose” this accompaniment figure at the end of beat two in ms. 16, 18, 20, and 24
- Practice left hand only with the pedal, making sure to “catch” a clean bass note for each new chord
- Play the left hand alone, focusing on the wide jump in ms. 4, 6, and 23-25